

Yours for the  
Old Paths.  
H. G. Allen



College of the Bible  
Lexington, Kentucky  
In Memory of

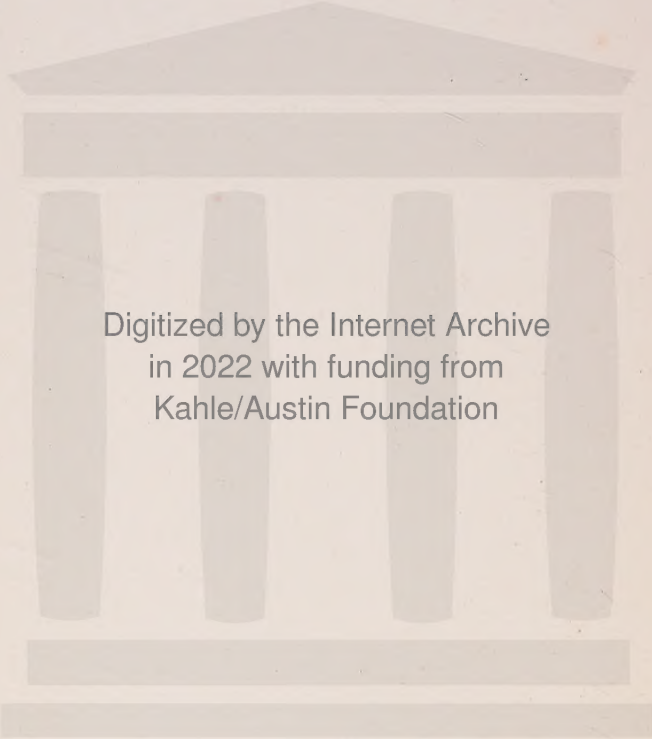








Virgil McClure.



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*F. G. Allen*



THE  
OLD-PATH PULPIT:

A BOOK OF  
ORIGINAL DOCTRINAL SERMONS.

BY  
F. G. ALLEN.

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COVINGTON, KY.:  
GUIDE PRINTING AND PUBLISHING CO.

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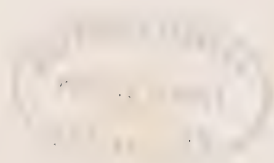
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## DEDICATION.

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TO ALL  
PREACHERS OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST  
WHO LOVE  
THE "OLD PATHS"  
AND  
DESIRE TO WALK IN THEM,  
THIS  
BOOK OF SERMONS  
IS  
FRATERNALLY DEDICATED  
BY THE AUTHOR.







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## PREFACE.

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It is quite common for an author to say of a book, that it was produced under difficulties. Doubtless these are often in great part imaginary. But there was nothing imaginary in the difficulties under which this volume was produced. It was during the warm summer weather of 1885 that the preparing of such a book was suggested to the author, and its importance urged. At the time he was almost prostrated with a fatal disease, and heavily burdened with editorial labors, the performance of which, at that time, and for months following, was peculiarly taxing to both mind and body. This caused a private correspondence with hundreds of deeply interested brethren, that was simply exhausting. The state of disease, with constantly declining strength, admonished the author that if the work was done at all it must be done quickly. Hence it was done with haste under these circumstances, during the closing months of 1885. It was impossible, therefore, to give to the work the time and care that were desired, and that would have been given, but for fear that it would be left undone.

Such subjects have been discussed in the book as the author thought would do most good in the future. He has not indulged largely in what is called "practical discourses;" not because he does not appreciate such, but because they are preached by others continually. And he has selected such "doctrinal sermons"

as are not so commonly preached by others. The discussion of important, fundamental principles, has been the leading purpose. The Revised Version has been used mainly in texts and quotations.

There has been no effort at systematic sermonizing according to the standards. Formal introductions and hortatory conclusions have not been indulged in. The effort has been to present the main thought of the subject, with but little regard to trimmings.

Should the life of the author be spared sufficiently long, a second volume, of a different class of sermons, may follow. If not, the unfinished work, with the rest of life's toils and cares, will be left at the feet of the Master.

On account of the fact that the sermons, as formerly preached, were never preached in close succession to the same audience, there is some repetition of thought as the lines run together on different subjects. But the thought will only be the better fixed in the mind by this repetition in different words.

The God of Providence whom we have tried to faithfully serve, has strangely preserved us, for which our gratitude is inexpressible; and the book as it is, with all its imperfections, is now committed to His providential protection by the

AUTHOR.



# THE OLD-PATH PULPIT.

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## SERMON I.

### THE PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS OF THE CURRENT REFORMATION.

Delivered before the Kentucky Christian Missionary Convention, Lexington,  
August 27, 1878.

“I am doing a great work, so that I can not come down; why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?”—  
*Nehemiah* vi: 3.

THIS is the language of Nehemiah, the servant of God, to the delegation sent to him by Sanballat and Geshem, asking him to meet them in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono, to hold a council together with reference to the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. In order that we may understand the force and significance of this language, it is necessary that we understand something of the circumstances under which it was spoken. It has an interesting and important history underlying it; and to this your attention is first directed. It is the history of the

#### REBUILDING OF JERUSALEM BY NEHEMIAH.

Those of you who are Bible readers, and I presume that most of this intelligent audience are, remember

that when the Jews were carried away into Babylonian captivity, some of the poorest of the land were left for vine dressers and husbandmen. These continued, with their posterity, in the land of their fathers. During the whole of the captivity, therefore, there were some Jews in and around Jerusalem.

It will be also remembered that during the captivity, a Jew might, by the special favor and providence of God, obtain a high position of trust and honor in the Persian government, such as we find in the case of Daniel, and that of Nehemiah.

Now it came to pass that during the latter part of the captivity, Nehemiah, a man of whose previous history we know nothing, obtained great favor in the eyes of the King, Artaxerxes; so that he enjoyed one of the first positions of confidence and honor in his government—that of cup-bearer to the King. While occupying this position, he came into the presence of the King on one occasion with a sad countenance. This was both unbecoming in the King's court, and dangerous; hence we infer that his grief was too intense to be hid. The King saw at once that he had some great sorrow at heart, and immediately asked him the cause. Nehemiah told him that one of his brothers and other Jews had come down from Jerusalem, and he had inquired of them the condition of the Jews that had escaped, who were left of the captivity, and of the condition of the city of Jerusalem.

From these he had learned that the remnant that were left of the captivity were in great affliction and reproach, and that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down, and her gates consumed with fire. Consequently he said: "Let the King live forever; why

should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchers, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?" In the kindness of his heart, the King asked Nehemiah what he could do to alleviate his distress. Then Nehemiah, forgetting all selfish considerations, and prompted by the holy patriotism of his heart, having previously taken the whole matter to God in prayer, in answer to which this favor was granted, asked permission to go over into the land of Judea and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. This was granted, and Nehemiah had placed under his command a small force for the accomplishment of the work. With this little band, he came over to the city of Jerusalem. Nehemiah kept his own counsel. He told no man of the purpose that God had put into his heart. He selected a few reliable men, and with these he went by night and took a survey of the city. The moon must have been riding high in the heavens, and pouring the light of her full-orbed splendor upon the ruins of the "City of the great King," as Nehemiah beheld and described them. The city was in silent slumber; fit emblem of the slumber of the glory of Israel. As an indication of the utter ruin of the city, when Nehemiah came to the gate of the fountain, and to the King's pool, the beast on which he rode could not pass for the *debris* that filled the way. Having thus made himself thoroughly acquainted with the condition of the city, he matured his plans, and immediately set to work to rebuild the walls, and restore the place of his fathers' sepulchers to its former grandeur and glory. He then revealed to his men the purpose of his heart, and how, through the Divine favor, he had obtained a commis-

sion from the king to accomplish the work. The grand idea of restoring from ruin the city of their fathers, and wresting it from the reproach of their enemies, filled their souls with a holy enthusiasm, so that with one voice they said: "Let us rise up and build the walls."

But no sooner was the work of rebuilding the walls known to the Samaritans and other surrounding tribes, than it met with a united opposition. At first it was to them a source of merriment. They sharpened the shafts of their ridicule, and hurled them at it with fiendish delight. As a sample of their sarcasm, Tobiah, one of the leaders of the opposition, said: They talk about rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem! Hm! "The walls that they would build, even if a fox were to go up, he would break down *their* stone wall!" But Nehemiah was not to be turned from his purpose by this kind of warfare. His heart was set upon his work, and he was taking counsel with God, not with men.

But when the opposition saw that this kind of warfare was unavailing, like the farmer who could not bring the boy down from his apple-tree with tufts of grass, tried what virtue there was in stones, they resorted to a severer kind of weapons. They now brought the force of their united armies to bear against the work. When they saw that the walls were going to be built, and that a fox would not be likely to push them down, then the Arabians and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites, were exceedingly wroth, and conspired all of them together to fight against Jerusalem, and to prevent the accomplishment of the work.

When this emergency arose, Nehemiah placed some



of his men on guard, fully armed and equipped, and every man of his working force had his sword girded by his side, and with one hand held a weapon while he wrought upon the wall with the other. The enthusiasm with which the nobility of their work inspired them was manifest in that they worked upon the walls from the "rising of the morning" till the stars appeared at evening, and then slept by their work at night, so as to be a perpetual guard to it; and none of them put off his clothing, save that every one put them off for washing. Catching the spirit of their leader, the unanimity of the entire force is thus expressed: "The people had a mind to work."

It was also the purpose of Nehemiah to bring the walls up in uniformity, not one part to the neglect of another. This being the case, and the walls being "great and large," his men were "separated upon the wall one far from another," consequently they were few and weak at any given point. Therefore, Nehemiah issued an order that at the sound of the trumpet, which was kept near him, they should all rally to the point of attack. Whenever an attack was made, the bugle sounded, the forces rallied, the enemy was driven back, and never was there a breach made in the wall.

Now, that the walls are completed, and the ponderous gates are ready to be set up, there comes a change in the tactics of the opposition. Sanballat and Geshem, two of the principal leaders, send a delegation to Nehemiah, requesting that he meet them in some one of the villages of the plain of Ono, to hold a council together with reference to the rebuilding of Jerusalem. This is the coolest specimen of impudence

on inspired record. The devil himself never surpassed it. They had opposed the work from its incipency; first by ridicule, then by force of arms. But now that they see it is to be a grand success in spite of all their opposition, they want to hold a council about it, as if it was any of their business. But Nehemiah knew their purpose. He was too old a bird to be caught with chaff. He knew that they sought to do him mischief. And well might one less wise than he know that when such diplomacy follows the unsuccessful force of arms, mischief is always brewing. Nehemiah had no respect for such trickery; consequently he had no time for a council with such men in the plain of Ono, or anywhere else. He therefore responded in the language of the text: "I am doing a great work, and can not come down; why should the work cease while I leave it and come down to you?"

But, perhaps, some one is ready to say, "All this is a very interesting lesson in Jewish history, but what is there in it for us? What bearing has it on the religion of Christ?" Much in several respects. I think it contains a very important lesson for us in our plea for the restoration of New Testament Christianity. For, be it remembered, much of Jewish history was typical of a diviner substance in the Church of Christ, and especially was this true of that part that pertained to the temple and to the Holy City. But even if we should waive the typical character of the lesson, we are enabled, by analogy, to get a clearer conception of our work as a religious people, than we could perhaps otherwise get. Hence, to this analogy your attention is now invited. It is found in the

## · HISTORY OF THE CHURCH.

When Christ established His Church on the earth, it continued for about three hundred years one united body. During this time, while it had its troubles without, and its imperfections within, it was not troubled with the divisions now produced by sects and denominations. This was before denominationalism was born, or sectarianism became respectable. The followers of Christ were simply disciples, or Christians. They belonged simply to the Church of Christ, or, which is the same, to the Church of God. They wore no human names, nor did they belong to any sect or denomination, such as are now claimed to be within the pale of the Church of God. This everybody knows who knows anything of the New Testament. But finally the "Man of Sin," whom Paul describes, began to be manifest. One corruption followed another, till the Church was led away into a dark night of captivity, strikingly typified by the Babylonian captivity of the Jews. The Church was in Babylon, and, like the Jews, the devoted friends of the Master, hung their harps on the willows, and mourned over the desolation of Zion. The great apostasy predicted by Paul was upon the Church, and her few uncorrupted children sat in sack-cloth and ashes. Be it remembered that this great apostasy originated and developed *within* the Church, not without. Brethren, allow me to suggest a gentle warning just at this point.

The night of the Church's captivity grew darker as it grew longer, till twelve hundred years lay like a pall of death upon her prostrate form. During the greater part of this time the Bible was virtually a

sealed book, just as the Church of Rome would like to have it sealed to-day. The priest-ridden people were kept in ignorance of the Word of God; indulgences were sold as cattle in the market, to meet the extravagances of the papal court, and the temples dedicated to the service of Jehovah became but whitened sepulchers, full of the corruption of death.

In the sixteenth century that grand man of God, Martin Luther, awoke the world, as it were, from a slumber of ages, and gave the Bible to the people. By exposing the corruptions of the Church of Rome, and giving the Bible to the people to read for themselves, he gave the "Man of Sin" a blow from which he has never recovered, and never will.

Luther attempted to reform the Church of Rome. In this he failed. That Church is as corrupt to-day, except so far as it has been influenced externally by its contact with Protestantism, as it was in the days of Martin Luther. But while Luther failed, significantly, to reform the Church of Rome, he succeeded in building up a mighty power in the earth, protesting against these corruptions, and hence called Protestantism.

But while Luther accomplished a great work in the world, for which we delight to honor his memory, it never entered into his mind to cease his fruitless efforts at reforming a corrupt and apostate Church—a thing which, as yet, has never been accomplished—and going back over all the dark and corrupt ages of the Church's history, and taking the divine model which God has left us of it in the days of its primitive purity, reconstruct the Church as it was at the beginning. At least, if such a thought ever entered his



mind, he never acted upon it; hence it has never come down to us.

Contemporary with Luther, and co-operating with him in his grand work, were other great reformers; such as Zwingli, Knox, and Calvin. Of all these, Zwingli alone seemed to have a correct conception of such a reformation as the age demanded. These are the different lights in which he and Luther viewed the same subject: "Luther was desirous of retaining in the Church all that was not expressly contradicted by Scripture, while Zwingli was intent on abolishing all that could not be proved by Scripture. The German Reformer wished to remain united to the Church of all preceding ages (that is, the Roman Catholic Church), and sought only to purify it from everything that was repugnant to the word of God. The Reformer of Zurich passed back over every intervening age till he reached the times of the Apostles; and, subjecting the Church to an entire transformation, labored to restore it to its primitive condition."—*D'Aubigne's History of the Reformation.*

But while Zwingli had this just conception of a true reformation, his influence was overshadowed by that of Luther; hence his principles never obtained in what is known as the Reformation of the sixteenth century.

Following this, in the eighteenth century, was the Reformation of John Wesley. Wesley's work was, in some respects, similar to that of Luther. He labored to reform the Church of England, of which he lived and died a member. But in this, like Luther in trying to reform the Church of Rome, he made a signal failure. His efforts resulted, however, in the building up of another denomination characterized largely by

those principles which he tried to infuse into the Church of England. But great as was the work of Mr. Wesley, for which we delight to do him honor, it seems never to have entered into his mind to leave the Church with which he stood identified, whose corruptions he was powerless to correct, and, going back over all the intervening ages to the days of the Apostles, reconstruct the Church of Christ as it was at the beginning. None of the Reformations of the past, therefore, were based upon this principle. It is chiefly in this respect that the Reformation with which we to-day stand identified differs from all others. Hence it is in strict propriety called

#### THE RESTORATION.

The current Reformation, inaugurated by the Campbells and their co-laborers, was not an effort to reform some existing church or denomination, as such. Evidently the correction of the unscriptural abuses in all the denominations was one purpose for which these godly men labored, yet it was not the fundamental principle on which their Reformation was based, nor the leading object for which it was inaugurated.

Neither was it the purpose of these Reformers to establish a new church, or to build up another sect or denomination in the world. They believed that already the world was cursed with too many; hence, to add another to the number was the farthest thing from their purpose.

Since their leading object was not to reform churches or denominations as such, nor to establish another, the question arises, what was the specific

## OBJECT OF THIS REFORMATION?

I shall attempt briefly to answer this question.

About the beginning of the second quarter of the nineteenth century there seemed to be, in the special providence of God, a turning of many minds, wholly disassociated and unknown to one another, to the Word of God as the only authority in religion. There seemed to be almost a simultaneous longing in many hearts to throw off the yoke of human bondage in religion, and form their faith and practice simply and purely by the Holy Scriptures. Chief among these were Thomas and Alexander Campbell.

In contemplating the Word of God as our only authority in religion, these men saw the wonderful reformation that it involved as a consequence. They saw that the Church, as it was at first established, when it knew no other authority but that of divine inspiration, had fallen under the apostasy predicted by Paul. It had been led away into its Babylonish captivity by the "Man of Sin;" and from this bondage it had never been liberated. Luther had broken the fetters with which Rome had for ages manacled the people of God; but instead of bidding the captives go free, and return to their native land, he strove only to mitigate their bondage. Consequently the Church was yet in Babylon. It had long been her privilege to go out, but as yet she had no one to lead the way. This was what the Church of God needed above all things else—to be taken out of Babylon; and this, by the help of God, they resolved to attempt. They resolved to go back over all the dark and polluted pages of the Church's history, disregard-

ing all authority that had been usurped during the long centuries of her captivity, until the golden age of her virgin purity was found, before the polluting touch of human hands was laid upon her, or the perfume of her garments defiled by the foul breath of the apostasy, and restore her to the world in all the divine perfection that characterized her when she emanated from Him who said: On this rock I will build my Church. Or, in other words, it was their purpose, like that of Nehemiah, to go up out of the land of captivity and rebuild the walls of the spiritual Jerusalem. Those walls had been broken down. Those gates had been consumed. The city of our fathers lay in ruins. Its principal highways were blockaded with rubbish. Even the sepulchers of those dearest to our hearts were dishonored. Laying aside the figure, it was their purpose to go back to the beginning, and, taking the Church as it is revealed to us in all its characteristics in the New Testament, restore it to the world precisely as it was at first. Their work, then, was really a work of *restoration*.

Every one must admit that the Church of God, during the first age of its history, when everything, both in faith and practice, organically, was given it by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, was just such a Church as God would have. Had He desired it otherwise, He would have ordered it otherwise. Not only was this true for that age, but for all ages. He who saw the end from the beginning, constituted His Church to meet the wants of His cause in all times and in all countries. This being true, it follows that the restoration of that Church in all respects as it was



at the beginning, is the thing above all others that God in His providence would have accomplished. If He does not look upon a work of this kind with special favor, then we are without evidence that He looks with favor upon the observance of any divine precept or example. That which was well pleasing to the divine Father in the establishing and perfecting of the Church, must be well pleasing to Him now. If this be not true, then we are left in this age without a criterion of truth. It seems to us, therefore, that this work, when properly understood, must meet the approbation of all good men. While it lays the ax at the root of all sects and parties in religion, it lifts us infinitely above them. Since the Church of God at the beginning was purely a divine institution, its restoration is a divine work. Such a work is as far above that of laboring to build up a mere sect or party in the world, as the divine is above the human. This work is not in the spirit of sect. It is wholly

#### UNDENOMINATIONAL.

Since the Church of God in the apostolic age did not contain sects and denominations such as now claim to be identified with that institution, it follows that whenever the Church is restored as it was in that age, it will be divested of all these denominational peculiarities. Whether the Church restored shall eventually cover the whole earth, and destroy all denominationalism, or whether it shall obtain only in part, the principle is the same—it will be wholly undenominational.

The world is exceedingly slow to learn that Christianity may be purely undenominational. I do not

mean in the sense in which Moody and that class of sensationalists use the word, and even in which some brethren are now using it—that is, laboring in the interests of *all* denominations. But I mean it in its true sense—that is, standing identified with *no* denomination.

When you talk to men about being a Christian, they want to know what *kind* of a Christian. Or, in other words, they want to know what you are in addition to being a Christian. When you tell them that you are simply a Christian; that you decline to be anything else, they know not where to place you. When you tell them that you belong to the Church of God, or, which is the same, the Church of Christ, they want to know to what branch of the Church, or to what denomination you belong. When you tell them that you don't belong to any denomination, but simply to the Church of Christ, they are unable to give you a "local habitation and a name." Yet this is one of the simplest things in all the world. This was precisely the position of the first Christians. They were Christians, or disciples of Christ, and they were not anything else. They belonged to the Church of Christ, and they did not belong to anything else. In this consisted their unity.

The undenominational attitude of New Testament Christianity may be clearly perceived by the aid of a simple illustration. It is said that during the late war a circumstance of this kind occurred in Northern Kentucky. Two preachers of different denominations who were quite friendly, as all preachers would be if it were not for these unscriptural divisions, concluded to hold a meeting together. The understanding was

that each was to lay aside his denominational peculiarities, and they would labor together to bring sinners to Christ, without reference to denomination. Then, at the conclusion of the meeting, their converts, if they should have any, should be left free to identify themselves with either denomination, as they preferred. As well as I remember, and it was near where I lived, they had about twenty converts. Assuming that they were truly converted, they were converts to Christ, not to party. They were all brought to faith in Christ, and to repentance of sins, and were buried with Christ in baptism. Now, before these converts are divided, and take their denominational stand, while on the seat before us, I want to ask with reference to them, a few questions.

1. What are they? They are Christians. This every one must admit. For if they are not Christians, then believing in Christ and obeying the Gospel do not make one a Christian. But what else are they? Nothing. Not yet; as yet they have taken no other name. They are simply Christians; nothing more; nothing less.

2. To what church do they belong? To the Church of Christ. If not, then becoming a Christian does not make one a member of the Church of Christ. They have believed in Christ, been baptized into His death, and become members of His body. They, therefore, belong to the Church of God. But to what denomination do they belong? They do not belong to any. As yet they have taken no denominational stand. They belong simply to the Church of Christ; nothing more; nothing less. They now occupy a position in

which all Protestants, at least, admit them to be Christians and members of the Church of Christ.

3. Now suppose that, perceiving this, and seeing that they occupy the most popular and "orthodox" position possible, they conclude to continue in that position, and refuse, therefore, to go with either of the preachers. On the contrary, they continue to meet to edify one another; and to keep the ordinances as they were observed by the first Christians. Then what are they? The world must answer: They are Christians. What more than Christians? Nothing more. To what church do they belong? To the Church of Christ. To what denomination do they now belong? To none. They stand precisely where the first Christians stood in all these respects; and they constitute just such a congregation as those engaged in this work of restoration have been constituting all over the land for the last half a century.

I know it is sometimes thought presumptuous to speak of belonging to the same Church to which Paul and Peter belonged. But I must be allowed to say, that if I could not belong to the same Church to which they belonged, I would not belong to any. If I could not stand where the Apostles stood, I would stand nowhere. Every one admits that Paul belonged to the Church of Christ. But to what denomination did he belong? Every one knows that he did not belong to any. Therefore, there is such a thing as belonging to the Church of Christ without belonging to any denomination; and, in so doing, standing precisely where the Apostles stood, and occupying the position of all the primitive Christians and thus presenting the only Scripture ground of

## CHRISTIAN UNION.

The leaders of the Reformation saw very clearly that the Church thus restored would enable all God's people, who love truth more than party, to unite on the ground on which the first Christians were united during the golden age of the Church's purity. The Church as it was, without any human legislation, furnished the ground of Christian union then, and that alone can furnish a basis of Christian union now. Consequently the union of all God's people on the Bible as our only authority in religion was the ultimate object to be accomplished by the restoration of the Church. Grand conception! Glorious execution! The very thought never ceases to thrill me! I desire no higher honor on earth than to give all the powers of my life to the advancement of such a work, nor any greater glory in heaven than that which God has in reservation for those who are true to Him in this the divinest and holiest work ever committed to uninspired men.

That we occupy the only ground on which Protestantism can unite against its common and relentless foe—Catholicism—is simply conceded by those who have the freedom to impartially think, and the courage to fearlessly speak. Of this we had, but a few years ago, a striking illustration. During the excitement in the city of Cincinnati over the exclusion of the Bible from the public schools in the interests of Roman Catholicism, a public meeting was held at some point that I do not now remember, in the state of Indiana, of various denominations, to express their sentiments with reference to this introductory step in



a mighty contest between the enemies and the friends of the Bible—a contest between the authority of “the Church” on the one hand, and that of the Book on the other. During that meeting, a minister of high standing in one of the most influential denominations in the world, speaking of the conflict which must inevitably come between Catholicism and Protestantism, and how Protestantism must be united in order to meet it, turned to one of our preachers who was occupying the stand with him, and, taking him by the hand, said: “*When it comes to this, my brother, then we will meet you on ‘THE BIBLE AND THE BIBLE ALONE!’*”

The inference from this is clear. As the exponent of the sentiments of that meeting, and of the Protestantism which it represented, that speaker virtually said: “We will maintain our partyism, and keep up our divisions, till in the providence of God we are *driven* together; then we will come to that position to which you have for half a century been inviting us in harmony with the intercessory prayer of Jesus! Your position is right, and the only Scriptural and possible ground of union, but we will not come to it as long as we can help it! When forced from our sectarian position we will go to yours!” How wondrous are God’s ways in making the wrath of man to praise Him!

Since “it is glorious to create, but more glorious to redeem,” the redemption of the Church of God from its captivity and apostasy, is the most glorious work that ever thrilled the human heart, or nerved the human will. My faith is that God’s benediction will ever rest on the man who is faithful to this work, and that His curse will ever follow him who abandons

it, or understandingly opposes it. But that the work of restoring the Church was to be opposed, is clearly indicated in several places in the Bible, and typified, perhaps, in the opposition experienced by Nehemiah. Hence a few words with reference to the

#### OPPOSITION TO THE WORK.

The ridicule and contempt heaped upon the work of Nehemiah in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, have been more than reproduced by those who have set themselves in opposition to the work of rebuilding the walls of the spiritual Jerusalem of which that was a type. Especially have the fathers in this Restoration experienced this in a high degree. "These people talk about restoring the Church as it was at the beginning! Why the church that they would restore, even the bats and owls would hardly deign to occupy in twenty years!"

Forty years ago such prophetic sarcasm was common as household words, not only in the family, and the irresponsible neighborhood gossip, but in the pulpit and the public prints. But there were false prophets in those days, even as there are false prophets now. These sect-inspired seers were estimated at their proper value; hence those grand men of God were not to be turned from their heaven-born purpose by the sneers and scoffs of a people who did not comprehend, and consequently did not appreciate, their work.

But this was not the only kind of opposition which the work was destined to meet. The united force of arms brought to bear against this work, like that against the work of Nehemiah, has made this country

resound with their clash for half a century. Where is there a grand old hero in this contest for things as they were at the beginning, who has not felt the blows of the enemy, thick and heavy, from every quarter, and smiled as he heard their harmless ring upon his armor? Ah! my brethren, the man whose spirit is not stirred within him, whose best mettle is not aroused, who is not inspired with no mean kind of inspiration, as he stands in the thickest of such a fight for such a cause, clad in an armor of divine truth as impenetrable as the shield of Achilles, is a stranger to the spirit of genuine, sanctified chivalry! But, soul-inspiring as is this plea, and the labor for its accomplishment, there have ever been those who object, and I wish to notice the grounds of their

#### OBJECTIONS TO THE WORK.

“The idea of reconstructing the Church of God after the divine model, and on this confessedly orthodox ground unite God’s people as they were at the beginning, I grant,” said one of the leading men of Kentucky to me, “to be a grand conception of spiritual work in this age, and worthy of all acceptance; but I have serious objections to some of your methods of accomplishing the work.”

“*First*. I think your people are too fond of controversy. You are too pugnacious. You delight too much in theological warfare.”

Now, in this, I frankly confess there may be some truth. It may be that we are just a trifle more pugnacious than necessary. People are liable at times to overestimate the importance of opposition, and do more in meeting it than it really deserves. But if,

in our work of restoration, we have occupied a war-like attitude, the question arises, Who is to blame for it? If there has been too much theological warfare over this work of restoration, blame certainly attaches somewhere; then let us see who is responsible, and let the blame rest where it belongs.

When Nehemiah's men went forth on the wall day after day, each one with a sword girded by his side, and holding a weapon in one hand while he worked upon the wall with the other, what did it mean? Why were they thus armed? Were their arms any advantage to them in their work? Were they wearing them simply as ornaments, in whose glitter they took more delight than in their work? To ask these questions is to answer them. Nehemiah's work was opposed by the force of arms. He was, therefore, left to the alternative of arming his men, and defending his work while he prosecuted it, or, in craven cowardice, to abandon the enterprise. In the fear of God, and the love of his work, he chose the former; and his name is enrolled high upon the scroll of God's grandest heroes. The arming in his case was a necessity; and it has been none the less so in ours. Our work has been opposed; opposed by theological arms; opposed by the united forces of Christendom, because it means death to their party divisions; consequently we had to arm ourselves, stand upon those walls, repulse the enemy as the work progressed, or, in the contemptible fear of human opposition against a divine work, ignobly abandon it. In the fear of God, and the love of truth, we chose to stand upon those walls, and by the help of God we expect to stand there till He shall say, "Well done! good and faithful soldiers!" It is

not our purpose to leave these walls and draw a sword or poise a lance outside of their limits; but woe be unto him who assaults the work! The objection, then, to our war-like attitude is not well founded. It is based on a misconception of our relation to the work. The blame attaches to the opposition; and there let it rest.

"*Secondly*," says the objector, "you lay too much stress upon some parts of your work, and not enough upon other parts. For instance, you attach too much importance to baptism. You preach too much about it; write too much about it; debate too much about it. You seem to lay more stress on baptism than on any other part of your work. Instead of advancing your work, I think you retard it by this everlasting harping on baptism."

Now, that all of this may contain some truth I have no disposition to deny. I think it is at least probable that we have given just a little more attention to baptism than the strength of the opposition has demanded. Indeed, it would have required wisdom more than human to have determined at all times just the amount of force necessary to protect any part of the work from the opposition that sought its destruction. That man is a skillful gunner who never uses shot too numerous nor too heavy for the game.

But if we have given more attention to baptism than to some other parts of our work, the question again arises, Who is responsible for this? Remember that when Nehemiah was rebuilding those walls, he labored to bring them all up in uniformity—not one part to the neglect of another. Consequently he said, "The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another. In what place, therefore,

ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us." Now, imagine yourself standing on one of the mountains overlooking the city. You are watching the men as they quietly perform their work on all parts of the walls. Every man has his sword girded by his side, and holds a weapon in one hand while he works on the wall with the other. You discover, however, that their minds are not on their weapons, but on their *work*. You look down one of the valleys and you see the "army of Samaria" stealthily approaching the city. It is unobserved by the workmen. It selects its point of attack, and rushes to make a breach in the wall. Instantly the trumpet sounds, instantly the forces rally—to the other side of the city! What would you think of it? What would the world think of it? Those workmen would be held in everlasting contempt.

*When* did Nehemiah's trumpet sound? When an attack was made. *When* did the workmen rally? When the trumpet sounded. *Where* did they rally? *To the point of attack—the place where the enemy was.* Therefore, if they rallied to one place more frequently than to another, it was not because they valued this part of the wall more highly than any other part, but because the enemy had selected that part for its attack. Precisely so with the workmen on the spiritual walls of the city of our God.

If we have had much controversy over baptism, it is not because we value it more highly than any other part of the work of restoration. It has been our purpose to bring this work up in uniformity, and hence to guard with equal care every part of it. What would baptism without faith be worth? Just as much



as the sprinkling of an infant. And yet we have had comparatively little controversy over faith. Occasionally we are called to meet an infidel at this point, and fight the battles of our religious neighbors, as well as our own. Who met, in the city of Cincinnati, in 1829, the boastful champion of infidelity, who had come from the far-off shores of Scotland, and, Goliath-like, had challenged to deadly combat the "clergy" of our land, from New Orleans to Boston? Was it a man who lightly estimated faith in Christ, and made baptism the center of a religious system? The believing world, whose battle was there fought and gloriously won, know better. Who fought the battle of Protestantism in the same city, in 1837, against a power that would nullify the Word of God, and subvert our pure faith in Jesus Christ into the veriest idolatry? Was it one who held as efficacious mere external forms, regardless of the spirituality for which Protestantism has ever contended? I envy not the head nor the heart of him who so contends.

We have had little or no controversy with our religious neighbors over the divinity of Christ, prayer, repentance, godliness and the like. Not because we do not value these things as highly as it is possible to value anything else, but because they have not been assailed. Let one of them be attacked, and the trumpet will sound, the forces will rally, and the clash of arms over that hitherto quiet point will awaken the sleeping energies of Zion! The controversy over baptism, then, depends wholly on the movements of the opposition. So long as they see proper to attack that point, we are prepared to defend it. And equally so of every other part of the work.

## NO COMPROMISE.

When the opposition saw that the walls of Jerusalem were about to be completed in spite of all their efforts to prevent it, they changed their tactics. They tried to induce Nehemiah to leave the work and counsel with them with reference to its completion. But he saw that this was only another trick to accomplish that which they had failed to accomplish by the force of arms. And just here, dear brethren, is our greatest danger. While we remain true to the principles on which we started out, there is no earthly power that can impede our progress. But the day we leave these walls and go out to take counsel with the world, will mark the day of our decline. We have nothing to fear from without. Our only danger is from within. This danger lies in the direction of indifference and compromise. While we are true to God in the maintenance of these principles, the divine blessing will rest upon our work. But should they ever be surrendered, ruin will as certainly follow as that the Bible is true.

When God dipped His hand in chaos and bespangled the universe with worlds He impressed upon them His divine will, and they rejoiced in that impression. In this impression they received the laws regulating their existence, and the moment one of those laws is resisted, disaster follows. When shining ranks of angels leaped forth from His open hand, they received a knowledge of His will, and they delighted in that knowledge; but the day that some disregarded it, they fell eternally under the divine wrath. When man is sued from the plastic fingers of the Almighty, reflect-

ing the Divine Image, the crowning work of His hands, he received a law of life unto life, or of death unto death. While he rejoiced in that law God was his companion and friend, but the day he compromised it with Satan, he fell from the favor of God, and went out under the curse of the Almighty. When God established His Church on the divinity of Jesus, and under the authority of His Son, He developed that Church under His fostering care till it rejoiced in a full-grown manhood in Christ. But when that Church forgot the lessons of its development, it went into apostasy and bondage. When God put it into the hearts of our fathers to restore that Church according to its divine model, their souls were thrilled with the thought, and they rejoiced in the privilege. While they have builded according to the model, as Moses built the tabernacle, they have received unsurpassed tokens of God's approbation; but the day that their posterity depart from that model and begin to build after the wisdom of the world, that day will God's presence and glory depart from them! Would to God I had the power to express this thought with angelic force, and burn it into the memory of our young preachers with a tongue of fire!

Never did a people have greater encouragement to hold fast their fundamental principles than do we. Their growth in the world has been unprecedented. The growth of Methodism has been regarded as one of the wonders of the world; and yet, when Mr. Wesley's plea for reformation had been earnestly pressed for nearly forty years, its adherents in Great Britain and Ireland numbered only 150 preachers and 35,000 members. At Mr. Wesley's death, when the princi-

ples of his Reformation had been proclaimed for about half a century, they were accepted in Europe, America and the West India Islands, by a membership of only 80,000.

In estimating the numbers throughout the world that have accepted the principles of Restoration in half a century, would it be far from correct to multiply these figures by ten? The growth of Methodism was after the first half century of its existence. Our growth in the past has been unprecedented, and we have only to be true to God in the work He has assigned us, to see results in the next half century that will amaze the world.

But in estimating the influence of our plea for Restoration, we are not to look simply to the numbers that have publicly taken their stand on this ground. The influence of these principles on the denominational world in the correction of excesses and abuses, has been one of its marked results. The religious thought of the world is to-day drifting more in the direction of the supreme authority of the one Book, and the union of God's people on that Book, than ever before since the apostasy of the Church. We have, then, but to remain true to our principles—a "thus sayeth the Lord," in matters of faith; the largest liberty in matters of opinion. Uncompromising in essentials; relenting in incidentals. As unchangeable as the divine decrees, where God has bound us; as yielding as a mother's love, where He has left us free—and ere long they will prevail from pole to pole, and from the rivers to the ends of the earth.

In conclusion, let us not forget an important fact in the history of Nehemiah's work. The secret of his

grand success is thus expressed: "We made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch day and night." Brethren, while eternal vigilance is the price of an uncorrupted religion, eternal prayerfulness is its life. Therefore, while we set a watch day and night over the faith of the Church, let us not forget to make our prayer unto our God for its purity. While we gird on our sword<sup>d</sup> and sleep by our work, "that we may be a guard to it by night, and labor on the day," let us not forget that "our sufficiency is of God."

One by one will we lay our armor down at the feet of the Captain of our salvation. One by one will we be laid away by tender hands and aching hearts to rest on the bosom of Jesus. One by one will our ranks be thus thinned, till ere long we shall all pass over to the other side. But our cause will live. Eternal truth can never perish. God will look down from His habitation on high, watch over it in His providence, and encircle it in the arms of His love. God will raise up others to take our places; and may we transmit the cause to them in its purity! Though dead, we shall thus speak for generations yet to come, and God grant that we shall give no uncertain sound! Then may we from our blissful home on high, watch the growth of the cause we love, till it shall cover the whole earth as the waters cover the face of the great deep.

## SERMON II.

## THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah : for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter ; and upon this rock I will build my church ; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.—*Matt.* xvi : 15-18.

THE word church is from the Greek word *ekkleesia*. It means an assembly. It does not designate the character of the assembly. It may be religious or otherwise. Twice is it applied to the mob at Ephesus. Once to the congregation of Israel in the wilderness. The kind of church must always be determined by the context. Whether it be a church of God, or a church of men, other terms and circumstances must decide. Some religionists are loth to call a different organization a church, hence call it a society ; as if the word church implied that it was a divine institution. We have human churches—many of them—as well as a divine one. The church to which your attention is invited in this discourse is the Church of Christ ; for He says, in the text, “on this rock I will build *my* church.” It is elsewhere called the Church of God ; also the body of Christ.

## ITS FOUNDATION.

The Church is here presented to us under the figure of a building. As such, we first invite attention to its



foundation; for a building, however faultless, is of little value if on a bad foundation. What, then, constitutes the foundation of Christ's Church? Romanists contend that it is the Apostle Peter. They insist that Peter's name is rock, and this is the rock of the foundation. But the language forbids this. Peter (*petros*) is masculine, while rock (*petra*) is feminine. Differing in gender, they could not be the same. Not only do the words differ in gender. They differ in meaning. *Petros* means a stone, a piece of rock. *Petra* means "a rock, cliff, ledge," according to the best of authorities. *Petra* is a solid bed of rock in its natural formation. *Petros* is a fragment broken off. It is evident, then, that Christ did not refer to Peter.

Again, the prophet, as quoted by Paul, settles the question of the foundation:

"Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence: and he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame."

Here the foundation is a person on whom we must believe. We are not required to believe on Peter, but Christ. If it be argued that the word rendered "him," may be rendered "it," we grant it; but this affects not the case. Rock is its antecedent, and on this we are required to believe. And we are not required to believe on Peter, nor on any mere proposition, human or divine. *Christ* is the object of our faith.

Again, Paul says: "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." This is conclusive. Had he intended to convey the idea that the "Confession" is the foundation, as many brethren hold, he would have been under the necessity

of expressing himself differently. This he knew, and and yet this he did not do.

Why did Christ use the word "rock," if He meant Himself? By the law of association. This was a peculiar characteristic of His teaching. He laid hold of things falling under His observation, and pressed them into the service of conveying spiritual truth. For example, when He walked by the Sea of Galilee He said to His fishing disciples: "Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men." Had He found them in a vineyard, or gathering the golden grain from the hills of Galilee, He would never have said; "I will make you fishers of men." His language was framed by their occupation. When He talked with the woman at the well, at Sychar, He said: "Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life." Here Jesus uses the words "drink," "water," "thirst," "well," and "springing up," in reference to His holy religion, all from association with the scene before Him. It was largely this feature of His teaching that caused the common people to hear Him gladly. So, in the text, when Jesus called the name of Peter, which means a stone, a fragment of a rock, His mind naturally passed by association to a grand bed of rock in its natural formation. On this He said He would build His Church. Thus, by association He passes from *Petros* to *petra*, from Peter to Himself. Had one of the twelve, except Peter, made the confession in answer to His question, we should have heard nothing of His building His Church

on a rock. What wonderful things arise incidentally in the world!

The idea that Christ is the foundation of the Church, has been objected to on the ground that He is its builder, and that He can not occupy two positions in the picture. It is quite evident that Christ could not be the foundation and the builder at the same time. But the objectors seem to forget that the position does not require that Christ occupy both these positions in the figure at the same time. He laid the foundation while He was here. He did not begin the building till He went to the Father. What He did while here in the flesh became the basis of His work after His glorification. Hence we find Him occupying a double relation in other things on the same principle. He was both a sacrifice and a priest, but not at the same time. He was the sacrifice here and the priest there. After He went to the Father He officiated as priest, offering His own blood, which He shed as a sacrifice. So this objection is without foundation.

#### \*THE GATES OF HADES.

But what did He mean when He said "the gates of hades shall not prevail against it"? What is hades? What is it against which its gates should not prevail?

Hades is a Greek word, meaning "the unseen." It simply means the state of the dead that is unseen to us.

It includes all the dead, righteous and wicked. Hence it was a great blunder in the King James translators to translate it "hell." It does not mean the place of future torment. It includes the suffering of the lost, and also the blessedness of the saved. Hence

the rich man lifted his eyes in hades, being in torment. Lazarus was also in hades, but comforted. Christ went into hades at death, but not into *hell*, as the creeds ridiculously assert. On the contrary, He went to paradise, as He said to the penitent robber, which was a department of hades. Hence the state of the dead—*death*—was the thing that Jesus said should “not prevail against it.” But what is the “it” against which the gates were not to prevail? Here we shall have to enlarge a little.

#### THE TIME OF BUILDING.

It will be observed that the building of the Church was then in the future. “On this rock I *will build*.” He did not say He had built it in the days of John or Abraham, but it was something yet to be done. And the word here used for build (*oikodomeo*) never means to repair or remodel, as some insist that Christ's Church is only the old Jewish church reconstructed. It occurs thirty-eight times in the New Testament, and is never rendered rebuild. On the contrary, they had a word that means rebuild (*anoikodomeo*), and they invariably used it to convey that idea. Had that thought been in the Savior's mind, He would have used it here.

Jesus tells His disciples what He intends to do—to build His Church—but informs them that before this work is done, He must die. His body must go into the grave, and His soul into hades. When this should come to pass, their hopes would be blasted. The joyous prospects of the coming kingdom which filled their souls, they would regard as dashed to the earth. They would look upon His grave as the end of their hopes.

All hell would be jubilant over the fact that the Son of God was in hades and Satan held the keys! Of course if He should not come forth; if the gates should remain closed against Him, His promise to build the Church would fail. But He assured them that He would come forth; that He would rise on the third day; that He would wrest from Satan the keys of hades; that He would unlock its ponderous gates; that He would drag the captor captive; and, coming forth a triumphant conqueror over the unseen world, He would build His Church according to promise, and the gates of hades, through which He had to pass before its accomplishment, should not prevail against it. They should not prevail against the *building of the Church*. Had they prevailed against the *building* of the Church, they would have prevailed against the Church in the preventing of its existence. In this sense only do I regard the Church as the thing against which the gates of hades were not to prevail.

If it be objected that the grammar of the passage is against this interpretation, we give the following reasons for thinking otherwise. In our judgment, the rhetoric demands this interpretation. Now the question is, will the grammar admit it? We think it will. In this interpretation the pronoun "it" refers to the *abstract idea of building*, and has for its antecedent *a word understood*—a noun implied in the verb to build. In his new Greek grammar, Anthon gives this rule of syntax: "Adjectives and pronouns are often referred, in respect to gender, to words which are implied in a preceding word, from the sense of that word or its peculiar composition." Under this rule we have a number of passages in the New Testament. For ex-

ample: "Go ye, therefore, and disciple all the nations, baptizing *them*." Here the pronoun in the masculine refers to the noun *disciples*, implied in the verb, and not to the noun "nations." Again: "By grace are you *saved* through faith, and *that* not of yourselves." Here the adjective pronoun in the neuter refers to the neuter noun *salvation*, implied in the verb "saved." So the feminine "it," in the text, may refer to the feminine noun "*oikodomesis*," implied in the verb "build." Then it was the building of the Church against which the gates of hades were not to prevail by holding a prisoner within them the Christ, the Son of the living God. He not only came out triumphantly, but He unlocked the gates of hades and carried off the keys. Hence He says to His beloved disciple on the Isle of Patmos, when His glorious appearance caused John to fall at His feet as one dead: "Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of hades."

Since the gates of hades did not prevent the Savior's building His Church as He promised, we next inquire as to when this promise was fulfilled—when did Christ establish His Church?

At the time of this conversation it was in the future. He had to die and come forth again before the work was done. Hence we have to look this side of His death and resurrection. After His resurrection He remained with them forty days, giving them many infallible proofs of His identity. Before He left them He gave them the commission to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all the nations. But they were to tarry at Jerusalem, and not begin their work under this com-



mission till endued with power from on high. On the day He left them, He told them to remain in the city till they should be baptized in the Holy Spirit. They inquired if at this time the kingdom should be restored to Israel. They were still looking forward to the fulfillment of His promise, though they had very crude conceptions of what it was to be. Complying with His directions, they returned to the city, and continued ten days, waiting the promise of God. On the day of Pentecost, fifty days from the resurrection, the Holy Spirit descended upon them; they were overwhelmed in His influence, and inspired by His wisdom. Speaking as the Spirit gave them utterance, they proclaimed salvation in the name of the crucified and exalted Christ, for the first time in the history of the world, and expressed the conditions of that salvation. Men and women believed, and were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Thousands became obedient in a day. Here is presented a new Savior—the only name given under heaven and among men by which we must be saved. The world was given to understand that there was salvation in no other, and that no one could now come to the Father but by Him. Now mark this fact: Our text is the first place in the Bible where the word “church” occurs. The world was four thousand years old, then, before it ever heard the word pronounced. Rather strange if a church existed all this time, when not one of the race ever heard of it! In the eighteenth chapter of Matthew the word occurs again. It is still in the future, and Jesus is directing His disciples in regard to their conduct in the Church. These are the only times it is used between the Pentecost, at which

Christ is announced as the world's Redeemer, and the creation of the world. But from this day on, we read of the Church on almost every page of Holy Writ. From this time on, it occurs considerably over a hundred times in the rest of the New Testament. For over four thousand years, then, the world never heard of the word. In a few years, after this Pentecost, it is on every tongue, and is recorded by the Holy Spirit over a hundred times! Then from Pentecost on, it is never spoken of as something in the future, but always as an existing institution. From this day and this city the cause spread, till we soon read of churches throughout Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Asia, Galatia, Macedonia, and even to Rome itself. We read of nothing of this kind before. The same Christ, the same Gospel, the same salvation, and the same conditions of it, were proclaimed in all these churches, and throughout the world, till the book of Revelation closes, that we find proclaimed for the first time on the day of Pentecost. We hold this to be absolutely conclusive that the Church of Christ was established on the day of Pentecost; that on the first Pentecost after His resurrection He fulfilled His promise to His disciples, made in the text: "On this rock I will build my Church."

#### ITS CREED.

As all churches must have a creed, we inquire as to the creed of this church. It is useless to talk about getting along without a creed. A church must *believe* something; and what it believes is its creed. Our objection to creeds is not that they are creeds, but to what they contain. A creed that is expressed in the exact language of the Holy Spirit can never be wrong.

When we go to the history of this Church, as we find it in the New Testament, from the Second of Acts on, we find that they were not required to believe the five points of Calvinism, the five points of Armenianism, or any other dogma of modern creeds. These questions of speculative theology were wholly unknown in that age. Nor were penitent sinners asked if they believed their sins were pardoned, or how they felt, or any thing of that kind, such as we now often witness in churches claiming to be guided by the New Testament. They were simply required to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, they were required to confess His name before men. Not the Bible as a whole was their creed. They were not asked if they believed the Bible. Nor was the New Testament as a whole their creed. At that time it was not written. But they were required to believe that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God." This is the confession of Peter in our text; and on his making it Christ promised to build His Church and give to him the keys of the kingdom. This confession declares the divinity of the foundation; hence, it was made in building on the foundation. The two, therefore, can not be separated.

When one believes with the whole heart that Jesus is the Christ, he believes, as a consequence, all that Christ says, and does all that He directs. He thus believes the whole of the New Testament, because Christ is its author. He believes the Jewish Scriptures because Christ indorsed them. All that human creeds truthfully say about future rewards and punishments, the resurrection of the dead, the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit, and so on to the end of the

chapter, they believe, because Jesus taught them, and He is the Christ. Hence, the confession includes all truth. It can not be made more comprehensive. The New Testament is simply an inspired commentary on this creed; and in this qualified sense we speak of it as our creed. This faith in Christ that leads to the keeping of His commandments, the recognition of His authority, is the faith that saves, and the faith that they made in that age a test of loyalty, and a condition of church membership.

#### ITS CONDITIONS OF MEMBERSHIP.

We next observe its conditions of membership. Those seeking membership in this Church were required to believe in Christ as their Lord and Savior. Not an intimation of an infant or any non-believer. Hence all the members were called believers. They were required to repent of their sins. They were immersed in the name or by the authority of Jesus Christ into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They were then required to live a godly life; to add to their faith the Christian graces; to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. When one became incorrigibly rebellious, as did the young man in the church at Corinth, the church withdrew its fellowship, and had no social intercourse with him, that he might feel the disgrace of his offence, and repent of his sin. Such were the conditions of admission into and continuance in the Church of Jesus Christ. Faith in Christ and submission to His authority were the one unchanging principle that animated and controlled the Church in all its features and members.

## ITS WORSHIP.

The worship of this Church is also a feature worthy of special consideration. We read that they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' teaching, in the breaking of bread, in the fellowship, and in prayers. Their worship partook altogether of the simple, spiritual worship of the synagogue, and was entirely free from the external pomp and ritualism of the temple. That was a worship addressed to the flesh, under a fleshly covenant; but in the Church of Jesus Christ the worship was to be in spirit and in truth. It was a spiritual religion, and required a spiritual worship. We, therefore, find the disciples meeting constantly for prayer, praise, and the preaching of the Gospel. One peculiar feature of their worship was their meeting on the Lord's day to observe the Lord's Supper. We read that when the disciples at Troas came together on the first day of the week to break bread, Paul preached to them. The history informs us that Paul and his companions had been in Troas all the week, and were waiting to depart on Monday. It is evident, therefore, that they were staying for the purpose of meeting the disciples of Troas on the Lord's day. Now, observe that while Paul was there all the week, and they knew he would be with them on the Lord's day, and preach for them as his custom was, for he never failed to preach Christ whenever he could get a hearing, the disciples did not come together that day to hear Paul preach. That they were anxious to hear him preach must be conceded. It is unreasonable to think otherwise. Indeed, so great was their interest in his preaching, and his interest in preaching

to them, that the meeting was continued all night. Yet, for all this, the disciples come together *to break bread*. This was the leading purpose of their meeting. Then, we ask, if, under those circumstances, with Paul to preach to them, they met to observe the Lord's Supper, should not that be the controlling thought and purpose of God's people in meeting now on the first day of the week? But look abroad throughout this highly-favored Christian land, and ask yourself, is it so? See the multitudes going in various directions on the Lord's day to places of worship, and ask for what are they going? How many are going for the purpose for which the disciples in Troas went, even when they had Paul for a preacher? How many churches spread the Lord's Supper every Lord's day? You see, then, that the leading purpose of meeting on that day in the Apostolic age is mainly lost in this age. This was not only the custom of the Church at Troas, but all the churches; and it so continued after the Apostles till the Church was corrupted by the "Man of Sin" that led it into the great apostasy.

#### ITS ORGANIZATION.

As all churches look upon their organization as one of their distinctive features, it is well to inquire into the organization of this Church, the Church that Christ built upon His own divinity as the solid rock foundation. We find that each congregation was a little kingdom of itself, with Christ as King. When the whole body of Christ, or Kingdom of God, consisted of the one Church in Jerusalem, it was essentially what every other congregation became when established. Hence, each congregation contained within itself all the ele-



ments of the Church of Christ for all lands and all ages. There was, therefore, no governmental authority by which the numerous churches were bound into an ecclesiasticism. Each governed itself by the laws of the King. They could not make law; they simply executed those which their King and Lord had made for them. Yet, with all this, they had a common interest. They were the disciples of one Master; the children of one Father; they were co-operants in the prosecution of one great work, and heirs to one common inheritance. Hence, the interest of one was the interest of all. Consequently, while one church was independent of all the rest as to *authority*, none having any authority but that of the Master, they were dependent as to voluntary association in a common good work, and the protection of each other's interests. Hence, we find them contributing to the poor in sections distant from them, and sending messengers to bear their fellowship to where it would be wisely used. Also, when the church at Antioch was troubled with false teachers, who claimed to be representing the church in Jerusalem, they sent delegates to lay the matter before the Apostles and elders at Jerusalem; and the Apostles and elders of this church vindicated themselves by showing the charge to be false, and directed all the churches in regard to the matter. Hence, it appears that when a common interest was involved, and the honor of a sister church involved, there was consultation and concert of action. Hence, independence in that which pertained to them alone under their Master, and voluntary association in that which involved a general interest, seems to have been their practice in regard to government.

Each congregation, when fully organized, had a plurality of elders and deacons. The elders, or bishops, which are the same, were the overseers of the church, and its spiritual teachers and guides. They were often assisted in their work by an evangelist. The work of the evangelist was general, and consisted mainly in preaching the Gospel and establishing churches, and caring for them in infancy. The deacons looked more particularly after the temporal interests of the church, in conjunction with the bishops. Their duties, like those of the elders, were confined to the congregation which they served. These—the bishops, deacons, and evangelists—were the only classes of public servants in the Church.

#### ITS NAMES.

Every Church, you know, must have a name. And frequently the name is the most particular part of it. I have often preached sermons in which the doctrine of a church would be cut and carved unmercifully, and the members would take it all kindly, and even praise the sermon; but only call the name and then your kindest criticisms are obnoxious. So it is an important thing to inquire into the name of this Church. One curious thing about it is that it had several names. All other churches of which we know anything seem to think that one distinctive denominational title is essential to its existence, and its place among the “sister denominations.” But Christ seemed to have no such ideas in regard to His Church. He never gave it one distinct, exclusive name. It is frequently called the Church of God; also the body of Christ; and as, in the text, he says *my* church, it is the Church of Christ.

In the plural, the churches are called churches of God and churches of Christ. Its members are called disciples, Christians, saints, children of God, believers, etc. All these names, both individually and collectively, indicate certain relations; hence their importance and use.

You will observe that I have not stopped to verify all these statements by giving Scripture which teaches them. The main reason is, they are so universally admitted that it is taken for granted that their proof by Scripture quotations is not necessary. They will not be denied by those acquainted with the New Testament.

#### ITS PRESENT EXISTENCE.

We now invite your attention to a very important question: Is this Church, which Christ built upon this divine foundation, still in existence? If it is still in existence, you will readily concede that all men and women should belong to it. Especially will you concede that if they wish to belong to any church, they should prefer the Church of Christ, thus divinely established, to any other. How, then, shall we determine this question? I know of but one way. Much is said in the world about succession, and much of it is very foolishly said. The best informed men, among the Protestant denominations that claim church succession, hoot at such an idea. Not one of the seven theological seminaries in the United States, belonging to the Baptists, regards the theory as worthy of respectful consideration. Yet this is the chief stock in the theological market of the Baptists generally, in the South and West! All the efforts I have ever seen to trace

this supposed line of succession, remind me of the boy who started to mill and got lost. At first he was on a smooth turnpike. This degenerated into a muddy lane; this into a path through the woods, and this into a squirrel track that went up a tree! So the assumed road of succession is broad and smooth in starting out, but in a few generations it is completely lost in the bramble bushes of Babylon. But if such a chain of succession as they desire could be established—one church linking into another of the same professed “faith and order,” from this age back to the Apostles, so that when you shake it here in a Baptist church it would rattle back to the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, when the Apostles were baptized in the Spirit of God, and first proclaimed the Lordship of the coronated Christ—what of it? If, when you compare the Church now with the Church then, you find that they do not correspond—that the one is unlike the other in many respects—what have you proved? Simply an apostasy. That’s all. But in the absence of such a chain, if a church now corresponds to the Church then, is not that enough? The Church then was just as God would have it; hence if one now is like it, it is just as God would have it. And can you improve on that? So, after all, whether a church now is what God would have it to be, depends on its conformity to the Church of that age.

When the word of the Lord sounded out from Jerusalem, churches were established all over the land. These churches were all the same in that which characterized them churches of Christ. The same Gospel preached, the same faith in Christ, the same obedience to Him, the same organization and worship that con-

stituted the Church of Christ in Jerusalem, constituted it in Corinth, Antioch, Philippi, and every place where the good tidings of salvation were carried. The result was wholly unaffected by time or distance. Whether one month after Pentecost or forty years, and whether one mile from Jerusalem or five hundred, the same things believed and done always resulted in the same kind of a church—a church of Jesus Christ. It follows, therefore, with all the certainty of mathematics, that the same Gospel, the same faith, and the same practice, will result in a church of Christ now, just as they did then. Hence, where a church now corresponds in these respects to the churches then, it is simply the same—just one of the number. It sustains just the same relations to those churches that each one of them sustained to all the rest.

Now we ask you to take all the churches of which you know anything—that is, denominations—and compare them in all their characteristics to the Church of the New Testament, established by Christ, and governed by the wisdom of inspiration. The Holy Spirit, through the Apostles, directed all that pertained to these churches. The Spirit received the mind of Christ and gave it to them. Hence all instruction was from the throne of the coronated Christ. Now, compare with them the churches of this age, and see which bears the closest resemblance. Which of the churches of this country has the same creed that the Church established by Christ had—the simple confession of His divinity; that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God? What church has the same conditions of admission to membership—faith, repentance, and immersion, without a word about a “Christian experi-

ence," "getting through at the mourner's bench," or subscribing to any controverted theological dogma? What church, the local congregations of which, in addition to their other meetings for prayer, praise and preaching, meet on the first day of the week to break bread? What church, the local congregations of which have their elders and deacons as their overseers and financial agents, and, in their government, are independent of all other congregations? What church now acknowledges the titles, "Church of God," "Church of Christ," and the like, as they are found in the New Testament; and whose members bear the names Disciples, Christians, etc., as the members of that Church were called that Christ built upon the rock of our text? Where do you find the religious people that correspond to the Church which Christ built, in all these respects? We, the people politely called reformers, and impolitely called Campbellites, have been striving for more than half a century to conform in all these essential respects to the Church that Christ established and developed under the ministry of the Apostles. We do not claim that in all respects we have reached that perfect agreement, practically, that should exist; but we are laboring on the theory of perfect agreement, and shall strive to bring our practice into as close conformity as the weakness of poor human nature is likely to permit. A perfect church, in point of conduct, is not attainable on this earth. As regards the conduct of its membership, not a church in New Testament times was perfect under the personal ministry of the Apostles, and some of them were shockingly far from it. But exact correspondence as to characteristic features, is possible. It was a demonstrated fact in every



church established in the apostolic age, after the first one—the mother of us all—at Jerusalem. It is equally a duty now, on the part of all who love the Savior, and desire to promote His cause, to labor for this complete correspondence.

It is a conceded fact by all rightly informed people, that divisions and alienations among the people of God are wrong. Christ prayed that such things should not exist, and the Apostles rebuked every symptom of it visible in their day. Now think of this proposition for a moment: Suppose that all the religious denominations in this land should strive to see which could come nearest reproducing the Church of Christ as it is revealed in the New Testament, in all its peculiarities and characteristics, what would be the result? You would see them throwing aside their names, and conditions of membership, and organization, and government, and every thing of that nature that is not clearly stated as belonging to Christ's Church, and adopting just those that are revealed in its teaching and practice. How long would these divisions last? How long till we would all, like kindred drops, flow into one undivided body? How long till the names Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, etc., would not be heard, and all God's people to-day would be known only by the names to which His people responded when they sat under the preaching of inspired men?

The only reason on this earth to-day why the people who love God are divided, is that they do not try, in their church features and characteristics, to reproduce these distinctive features of the Church of Jesus Christ. The Bible is not responsible for these things. They exist because men follow their own judgment of what

will be a good thing, instead of its clear and evident teaching. That it is right to strive to have every feature of the Church now to correspond exactly with its features then, no reasonable man will doubt for a moment. However much we may fail in reaching the perfection desired, the principle is right, and the effort is right. We then ask you, in the name of our Master, to commit yourselves to this principle, and give your lives to its development. Take your stand with God's people, who are striving to reproduce His Church in all its essential characteristics, and conform their lives individually, and as a church, to the divine model shown us on the mount of God. God intended His Church to be the same in these distinctive features in all ages; and when we labor now to have just what He gave the world in the age of its new-born love under Christ, we know we are doing that which is well-pleasing to our heavenly Father.

## SERMON III.

## THE DOCTRINE OF BALAAM.

“And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These things saith he that hath the sharp two-edged sword, I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s throne is; and thou holdest fast my name, and didst not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication.”—*Rev. ii: 12-14.*

CHRISTIANITY, in its purity, is the same now that it was eighteen hundred years ago. Just what God approved then He will approve now; and just what He condemned then He will condemn now. Hence if we would be approved, we must stand upon approved ground; and if we would escape condemnation, we must avoid the things that God then condemned. This position will not be denied by any one who accepts the Bible as a rule of conduct.

It will be observed that, in the text, the Lord commends the Church at Pergamos for some things, and censures it for others. He commends it for holding fast His name, and His faith—the faith once delivered to the saints. To hold fast the name of the crucified One in that place where Satan’s throne brought it into contempt, was no small honor. This shows that Christ appreciates the holding of His name, by those who claim to be His friends. There is more in this, involving the honor of Christ, than the world is wont

to think. And to hold to His system of faith, in all its essential elements, instead of adopting one of our own, by efforts at improvement, is the highest evidence of a loyalty that will secure the divine blessing.

But while the Lord thus commends the church for these things, He censures it for holding the doctrine of Balaam. It does not appear that the church, as such, held to this doctrine. In this case the things for which He commends it could not be true. But it had some in its fellowship who were guilty, and the church was condemned for retaining these few, and hence failing to expose their sin.

Since the church at Pergamos was condemned for retaining in its membership those who held the doctrine of Balaam, it behooves us to ascertain, if we can, in what that doctrine consists, that we may know whether or not we are guilty of a like sin. Our candid judgment is that thousands of men on whom the world looks as models of piety, are guilty of this sin; and it is a sin of great enormity in the sight of God. Preachers of the Gospel, so called, are the most disposed of all classes to this doctrine. While they differ in their theological dogmas, they are alike, in large measure, controlled by the doctrine of Balaam.

#### BALAAM'S HISTORY.

Balaam was an Old Testament character; and in order to determine in what the sin of this doctrine consisted, we must study his history and mark the peculiarities of his conduct that met the divine disapprobation.

Balaam was a prophet of God, of the patriarchal order. He belonged to the Midianites, and seems to

have possessed great influence among them. He lived at Pethor, a city of Mesopotamia.

When God entered into covenant with the children of Israel, after bringing them out of bondage, He gave them a new priesthood, a new law, and a new worship. The priesthood being changed, says Paul, there was of necessity a change in the law, in respect to worship. But this great and sweeping change from the priesthood and worship of the patriarchal age, to the priesthood and worship of the Jewish dispensation, pertained only to the twelve tribes of Israel. All the rest of the world continued on under the old priesthood and law. The Jewish religion was never given to the race as a whole, and they were never under its provisions. So, at this time, Balaam was a prophet of God of the old order, and was not officiating under the laws of the new dispensation. He was a descendant of Abraham, but was not in the covenant of Jacob. The Israelites were his kin according to the flesh; but he was not of their religion, except that they worshiped the same God.

The Israelites, in their journey to the promised land, had pitched their tents in the plains of Moab. Balak, king of the Moabites, was greatly distressed. He "was sore afraid of the people, because they were many." He said: "Now shall this company lick up all that is round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field." In the history of the Israelites in their journeyings to the land of promise, Balak had observed that when they were faithful to God, He fought their battles for them, and no power was able to stand before them. But that when, for any cause, they departed from Him and corrupted the religion

He gave them, they were left to themselves, and were overcome by their enemies. Herein is a valuable lesson to us. Their life was typical of ours. And it is just as true to-day as it was then, that while we are faithful to God, in the observance of all He has committed to us, both in teaching and conduct, the influence of the religion of Christ is irresistible. But when we compromise its teaching, and corrupt its practice, its power over the world is lost. God sustains men who rely upon Him and honor His word. He leaves to their own weakness those who trifle with His truth, and corrupt the purity of the divine life in Christ.

Balak knew that in loyalty to God the armies of Israel could march triumphantly through his kingdom, and that he was powerless to prevent them. His only hope, therefore, was in so corrupting them that God would leave them to their own strength; then he could resist them. To this end he sent for Balaam. He knew that Balaam had the power, as a prophet of God, of pronouncing both cursings and blessings—"I know that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed." He, therefore, selected messengers and sent them to Balaam, saying: "Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt; behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me. Come now, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me; peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land; for I know that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed." So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian, whom he had chosen as messengers, came to Balaam, and delivered the message of Balak.



Now, mark you well the conduct of this prophet of God. At this point we see the beginning of the "doctrine of Balaam" that ended in his ruin. Balaam knew that the thing which Balak wanted him to do, was wrong. He could not but know that these were God's people, under His special protection, and that an attempt to corrupt them, by the exercise of prophetic power or otherwise, was rebellion against God. Hence he should not have entertained the thought for a moment, of exercising such power. Had he spurned the message and the messengers, with the indignation becoming a servant of the most High, that would have been an end of the evil sought by his instrumentality, and a saving of himself. But reward was offered. The prophet saw wealth and honor before him, as a reward of unrighteousness. Hence, while he did not yield at once, he hesitated; and "he who hesitates is lost." He therefore said to the messengers: "Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me: and the princes of Moab abode with Balaam." (See Numbers, chapters 22-24.) It seems that Balaam was accustomed to conferences with God in relation to important matters, and now he proposed to consult the Lord about this, and bring the Lord's answer to these messengers. Think, now, of the presumption in this thing. Going, as a minister of God, to consult Him about a matter that he could not help but know placed him in antagonism with the very God whom he goes to consult! It shows the intense infatuation that has possessed him, through the allurements that lie in the background. He entertains his princely guests as if they were on the most honorable of missions; and while

they slept, in the silent hours of the night, he had an interview with the Lord. The Lord said to him: Who are these men that you are entertaining so hospitably to-night? And Balaam told Him the message that the men had brought. And then he sought permission to comply with the request of Balak, to curse the Israel of God. Now mark you well the Lord's reply: "And God said unto Balaam, (*Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people*) for they are blessed." Could a denial be more direct and positive than that? Was there a possibility of misunderstanding it? Did it contain the slightest hint of a possible contingency? Not a sentence that God ever spoke to man is plainer than that; not one ever expressed more emphatically His will. And Balaam understood it. The next morning he said to the princes of Balak, return alone to your own land; the Lord refuses to let me go with you. So they returned to Balak and reported their failure. But he selected men, more in number and more honorable than the first, and sent them back to Balaam. Why did the King of Moab thus act? Why send another embassy to Balaam, when the first had failed? He saw from the conduct of Balaam that he could be bought. All that was necessary was to make the sum equal to the price of his conscience. Had he spurned the first offer as a man would who can make no bargains with sin, the second would not have been made. And this very principle now underlies, for weal or woe, the lives of religious men. Whether or not men will be tempted to do wrong the second time, depends largely on how they refuse at first. Let a young man who has recently confessed the Savior be asked by one of his old chums

to take a drink. If he looks his tempter firmly in the eye and says: "No, sir; I am a Christian"—says it in a way that carries conviction home to the heart that he *means* it; he will not likely be asked again. But if he halts and hesitates and stammers out a feeble excuse, though he may resist at that time, the attack will be renewed, and his yielding is only a question of time. So, not only the surest, but the easiest way to live the Christian life, is to live it on the positive side. He who tries to live on the border between the Church and the world, will have a hard time of it. He has n't religion enough to enjoy the service of God, and is too much embarrassed by his church relations to enjoy the service of the devil.

So the messengers of Balak came again to Balaam, offering promotion to very great honor, if he would only do this wicked thing. The king could take no denial; Balaam must serve him in his wicked purpose, and he would share with him the honors of his kingdom. "And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, if Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I can not go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." Exactly so; but still it seems that he was willing to be found trying very hard! The idea that he could not possibly go beyond the word of the Lord, and then go at once to ask of God the second time for permission to do what God had plainly said *thou shalt not do!* If he could not go beyond the word of the Lord, he was exceedingly anxious to have God change His word. His speech, measured in the light of his conduct, shows the basest hypocrisy. If he meant that gold and silver could not induce him to do it, he knew that

he was seeking to do it all the while. If he meant that he had not the power, he had made one effort, and intended that night to make another. Why persistently and wickedly entreat God for permission to do that which he knew he had no power to do? So it was base hypocrisy in any view of the case.

Then Balaam said to the princes, "Now, therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say unto me more." Brethren, the iniquity of that life, which is a warning to us all, was wrapped up in that word "*more.*" The Lord had told him once that he should not go. But the answer did not suit him; his heart was set on going. So he will go again and see what the Lord will say more. He hopes for an answer more in harmony with his inclinations. Displeased with the Lord's decision, he is determined, if possible, to have another. If he can get the Lord to contradict Himself it is all right, provided he can only get an answer to suit him. With a man of faith and loyalty to God, one expression of His will is the end of all controversy. So the first reply of God to Balaam would have forever settled the question of his going on such a mission, had a simple, clear expression of the divine will been, with him, the end of the law. Here was the seed-bed of his sinful career.

When Balaam went to the Lord the second time, to see what He would say "more," the Lord told him to go. Now mark this fact: In the first interview, the Lord said "thou shalt not go." In the second interview He said "go." The one was a direct contradiction of the other. After saying "thou shalt not go," why did the Lord say "go?" The Lord saw that

Balaam's heart was set upon going; that he was unwilling to regard the Lord's decision when it conflicted with his own purposes; that he was bent upon trifling with His word; and woe to the man that God discovers thus doing! He will give him the counsel he wants, and give him His curse with it. When He saw that Balaam's heart was set upon going, notwithstanding His positive prohibition; that his rebellious spirit was yet controlling him, He said go. "You are determined on going; your heart is set on it; nothing else will satisfy you; my word of positive denial is offensive to you; go, then, and take the consequences."

"And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab. And God's anger was kindled because he went." Here we have a curious thing—a thing not elsewhere found, as I now remember, in all the Book of God. We have the curious thing of God's anger kindled against a man for doing what He told him to do! Isn't that strange? God told him to go, and then was angry because he went. Where else do you find God displeased because a man did what He told him? How do you account for this? His doing, in this case, what God told him to do, was not because *God told him*, but because it was the *inclination of his own heart*. It was not an act of obedience. He would not rest till he got an answer to suit him, and then he did it because it did suit him. He was controlled by his own will, and not by the will of the Lord. He was pleased with God's will only when that coincided with his own. He subordinated God's will to his, not his to the Lord's. Balaam belonged to that class of men to whom God says He will send strong delusions, that

they may believe a lie and be damned, because they have not the love of the truth. It is not because men have not the truth, that God will give them up to destructive delusions; but because they have not the *love* of it. Balaam loved the truth of God only when it harmonized with his own inclination. He loved it not, therefore, for its own sake. There are many Balaams in the world. On this principle, therefore, God was angry when Balaam did what He told him to do.

And God sent His angel to stand in the way, warn him of his danger, and save him yet, if possible, from the utter ruin that awaited him if he continued in his rebellious course. Balaam became enraged at the ass because of its conduct, and smote it with his staff. "And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? . . . Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand; and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face." And the angel said: "I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before the Lord." Here is a man going by God's permission—an extorted permission—and yet his way is *perverse*, and God is trying to turn him from it.

"And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me." This indicates that the sin confessed was that of cruelly beating the beast. The angel had reprimanded him for his conduct in this respect, and assured him that the conduct of the ass, for which he smote it, had saved his life. He then confessed that



he had sinned in this conduct, for he did not know it was the angel that caused the beast thus to act. Note this fact: He readily confesses his sin in the treatment of a beast, but withholds such a confession in regard to God. Just as men to-day will confess in regard to the merest trifles, and yet cast under their feet the authority of Jesus Christ in regard to the positive conditions of eternal life. The world is full of Balaams, and sectarian pulpits are crowded.

“And Balaam said to the angel representing the Lord: “Now, therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again.” Mark this confession. In regard to his treatment of the ass, he could say, “I have sinned;” but in regard to his conduct toward God, he says, “*if* it displease thee.” He had trifled with God’s word; had got God to grant permission at first refused; he now knew that God had sent His angel to dispute his way, and the angel had told him that his way was perverse before the Lord, and yet, in the face of all this, he says, “*if* it displease thee.” How could a man, whose conscience was not seared by trifling with the divine will, put in such an “if”? There is a great deal of just such repentance ‘so called’ in the world to-day. A man will do that which brings shame and disgrace upon the church. He knows that the hearts of his brethren are grieved because of his conduct. He knows that his standing and his influence, both in the church and out, are injured thereby; and yet, when labored with, he will say: “I don’t see any harm in it, but *if* the brethren are aggrieved about it; if they are going to make such a to do about nothing, I suppose I shall have to refrain.” Brethren, if that is the best any of you can do in the way of repentance

for conduct that brings reproach upon the cause of the Master, and diminishes your influence for good, don't have your friends get me to preach your funeral sermons when you have passed to your account. The truth of God would compel me to indicate my unqualified conviction that you had gone as straight as a sunbeam to perdition.

"The angel of the Lord said unto Balaam, Go with the men." He had stood in the way; had moved from point to point to arrest the madness of the prophet in his perverse way, and now, after calling him to a halt, and having an interview, he says "*Go.*" How is this? Just because Balaam had again, under the divine hand extended to restrain him, manifested his self-determined and unsubmissive spirit. If, when he saw that God had followed him, loth to give him up to the ruin awaiting him, he had prostrated himself in the dust of humility and confessed his sin against God, without any ifs or contingencies, as an honest, sincere, convicted sinner would have done, the angel would have lovingly taken him by the hand and led him back to God and home. But when his profession of repentance was simply a farce, and an insult to God, he told him to go; and God's curse went with him.

#### THE LESSON IT TEACHES.

But now, what is there in this for us? How do these principles apply in this age of the world? How may we now be governed by Balaam's principle, be advocates of his doctrine, and guilty of his sin? Here is where the matter most concerns us. To this, therefore, I invite your serious consideration.

There are two distinct departments of the Christian

system and of the religious life in which this principle is manifested. Its manifestation is not always in the same things, but its existence as a controlling principle is indicated in a great variety of ways. I shall try to illustrate its workings in regard to the conditions of salvation and the practical duties of the Christian life.

A man desires to know what he must do to be saved. He correctly says, "I will see what the Lord says about it." In the first interview the Lord tells him that he must believe on Jesus as the Christ; and that if he believes not, he shall be condemned. This is the plain, simple, unmistakable answer of the Lord on that point. But the man says: "That does not suit me; that is not in harmony with my inclinations. I should not object to believing on Christ in a certain sense; but the idea of believing on Him in the sense of accepting Him as absolute Lord and Master, whose word alone shall guide me in religion, and whose authority is absolute and supreme, is not in harmony with my inclinations to a high degree of liberalism. I will go, therefore, and see what the Lord has to say *more*. I will read His book through from side to side, but what I will find something that suits me better than that which He told me before." So he goes to his New Testament, determined to take it from the beginning till he finds something to suit him. He reads on through the first, second, third, and fourth chapters before finding anything bearing on his theme. When he gets into the fifth, he reads: "Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God." He studies it a moment, and exclaims: "This is precisely the thing I want. This

suits me exactly. I was determined to find something better than the commission, and I am glad I found it so easily. And then it so completely meets my wants. Just to think of it: Here is a positive statement that the peace-maker shall be called a child of God, and not one word about believing in Christ, about repenting of sins, about submitting to Christ's will and authority in all matters in religion—not a word of anything of the kind; only be a peace-maker, and all is secured. Now only think of what is involved in being a child of God. To be a child of God, is to be an heir of God, is to stand in the nearest and dearest relation to Him, and to be entitled to all His promises. And all this without faith, or repentance, or a godly life—only being a peace-maker. I am a peace-maker. I love peace, and I have made peace between my neighbors; and though I do not believe in the divinity of Jesus, and though I blaspheme the name of God when I feel disposed, I have the Lord's assurance of being a child of God and an heir of heaven." Thus he gets an answer from the Lord the second time. He came to see what the Lord would say "more." He got an answer to suit him; and one that, if followed out according to his interpretation, will lead to eternal ruin. Thus will every man get his answer who comes to God the second time to see what He will say "more," when He has already plainly expressed His will upon that point. God will not only give a man an answer the second time, if the first does n't suit him, but He will give to him one on which he can rest his conscience, when he is hunting for it.

By that method of dealing with God's word, there is n't a theory under heaven that the Bible does n't

teach. God tells men once, and rarely more than once, in language too plain to be misunderstood, what is required of them in regard to a given thing. He may talk a thousand times more about the way and the promises of life, and omit in every case His former utterance; but it will stand till the day of judgment His unchangeable will, as if He had repeated it on every page of Holy Writ. Jesus said: "He that believeth not shall be damned." In this He either told the truth, or He did not. If He did not, then all He taught here and elsewhere is worthless. If He did, then His promise concerning the peace-maker *includes this*, though not expressed. And the principle that compels it to include this, compels it to include, for the same reason, every other condition of eternal life expressed in God's Word. And if we are justified in eliminating one condition of salvation elsewhere expressed, because it is not repeated in a given text, we are justified, even compelled, by the same principle, to eliminate every other not thus repeated. And if this is justifiable in regard to one text, it is equally so in regard to every text in which a condition of eternal life is expressed. This being true, there is not a means or a condition of salvation expressed in the Inspired Record, that is not annulled. For there is not one that is not omitted somewhere where the promises of eternal life are given.

Another says: "I am perfectly convinced as to the necessity of faith in Christ, and of repentance, but beyond this I am unsettled. I will go, therefore, and see what the Lord says." He goes; and the Lord says: "He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved." "Repent and be baptized every one of you

in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." These and a number of other passages he reads which directly connect baptism with salvation, as a condition. They are not only plain enough to be understood, but, as in the case of Balaam, too plain to be misunderstood. But they did not suit his purpose. By force of circumstances, generally previous religious bias, the Lord's answer is wholly contrary to his inclinations. He is determined, therefore, to find something better than that—something more in harmony with his own will. He seeks to have the will of Christ conform to his own, rather than subjugate his to that of the Master. So, Balaam like, he goes the second time to God, to see what He will say "more." This time he finds where the Lord says: "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life." This and kindred expressions fill his soul with satisfaction. "Now," says he, "here is just the thing I want. Here eternal life is promised, and not a word is said about baptism. Salvation is predicated of faith, and faith only; for faith is the only thing mentioned in the text as a means or condition. Baptism is not necessary to salvation, else salvation would not be promised without it." This reasoning is so plausible that the great bulk of Christendom seem to regard it as expressing the truth. But a moment's consideration will expose its miserable fallacy.

#### A RULE OF INTERPRETATION.

If we are to conclude that baptism is not a condition of the remission of past sins under the enjoyment of full Gospel privileges, because salvation is



here promised and it is not mentioned, then everything else not mentioned must go the same road. Not only this: The same principle of interpretation that here cuts off everything but faith, in other passages cuts off faith. Take the one just noticed in the fifth of Matthew: "Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God." Here one has the promise of being a child of God, on the simple condition of being a peace-maker, and not a word about faith. Therefore, faith is not necessary to being a child of God. Consequently the rule that puts baptism out in one case, puts faith out in the other. Therefore, the principle that proves salvation by faith only, proves salvation without faith at all. And this holds good all the way through the Book. Give me your rule for proving justification or salvation by faith only, and by your own rule I will prove salvation without one particle of faith in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of humble investigation of the truth of God, I challenge any man to the task. The Master says: "All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men," except the sin against the Holy Spirit; and not one word said about faith as a condition. There is no condition of any kind even hinted at. Hence, according to the rule, no condition is required. It follows, therefore, that the rule of interpretation which proves justification by faith without baptism, proves universal salvation, except in the case of those who sin against the Holy Spirit.

I availed myself of this rule to justify a case of "spring fever" when a boy, and from that day I have never failed to observe its practical workings.

My father was a strong advocate of justification by

faith only. He had at his tongue's end all those passages which connect faith with salvation and leave out baptism. His argument was, that here salvation is promised, and only faith is mentioned; hence only faith is required. When his attention was called to the fact that baptism was elsewhere connected with salvation, just as faith is, he tried in various ways to explain the matter away. He stood for what was in his favorite texts.

A younger brother and I were clearing a piece of new ground in the spring of the year. One Monday morning, when he was going to La Grange to court, he gave us special directions about our day's work; and one special feature of it was, that we must keep at it. This was at the breakfast table. Soon after, we started to our work, and when a little way from the house he hallowed: "Boys, I want you to watch the fire closely to-day, and not let it get out." "All right," we responded. So we went to the clearing, sat down in the shade of a tree, and watched the fire all day. That night he asked us how we got along with our work, and we told him "finely; "that we did every thing he told us. But when he went out to "view the landscape o'er," we had to give an account of our stewardship. We insisted that he told us to watch the fire, and this we did to perfection. This he admitted as to the last direction, but said: "I told you before that to do the work." "Yes," said we, "but the last time you said anything about it, you didn't say a word about work. *It wasn't in the text.*" And thus he saw the practical effect of his own rule.

If one says: "I grant that in this particular passage nothing is said about faith, but it is elsewhere

expressed as a condition, and hence must be understood here," we grant the truth of it; but away goes his rule. To save faith as a condition of salvation at all, he destroys the rule by which he has been trying to make it the only condition.

The world seems slow to learn that truth is a unit; that every part of it harmonizes with every other part; that, therefore, a correct theory on any subject must provide for all known truth expressed in regard to it, and that when God says a thing once it stands as authoritative and as essential as if He had repeated it on every page of the Divine Volume. We should not expect God to repeat a thing in order to mean it, or to recapitulate in order to be believed. He warned man but once of the forbidden fruit, and the world has learned how awfully He meant what He said. The Master said but once, "He that believes not shall be damned." He talked about salvation many times and never repeated it. More than this, He repeatedly gave assurances of eternal life leaving this out; and yet it will stand till the day of judgment, that he who believes not will be damned.

This principle of dealing with God's word, by which we make it contradict itself in order to justify us in a thing on which our heart is set; to get an answer from God in harmony with our inclinations, is, in our judgment, the doctrine and the sin of Balaam; and the world is full of it. It is to-day the principle on which the ruinous divisions in the religious world are maintained. It is the seed-bed of sectarianism, and the curse of the world. Let the religious world to-day reverse the order, and strive to make every point in their theology conform to the word of God

in all its fullness and completeness, instead of trying to bend the word of God to a justification of their position, and how long would sectarianism live? Instead of readily and reverently conforming in all respects to the divine will, we are striving to have the divine will conform to ours. Whatever else may be included in the doctrine of Balaam, this is; this was its ruling principle; and this is enough to ruin any man or any people.

We often see striking manifestations of this principle in excuses for a life of sin in the Church. A few examples must suffice: A man confessed Christ, who was addicted to drunkenness. Very soon his old appetite came upon him, and he longed for whisky. He went to see what the Lord would say about it. He wanted to drink, and drink to drunkenness. But the Lord said, "No drunkard can inherit the kingdom of God." That was plain and unmistakable. But it did not suit him. His inclinations were to drink; his heart was set on it; and he wanted something to justify him in it. He went again to see what the Lord would say "more." He found his answer; and what do you suppose it was? "Not that which goeth into the stomach defileth the man." Therefore he would not be defiled by any amount of whisky he might drink; and he had the Savior's word for it. If he was not defiled he was still a pure, good man, and ripe for heaven. Brethren, how many of you have tried to soothe your conscience by just such dealing with God's word.

Another man set up a grog-shop soon after his baptism. When the elders went to see him about it, he, too, had been to the Lord to see what He had to say

about it. The Lord said: "Woe to him that puts the cup to his neighbor's lip." This was too plain to be misunderstood. But his heart was set on doing this thing, and the answer did not suit him at all. He was determined, therefore, to find something better. So he went the second time to get a different answer from the Lord; and he got it. Who ever failed to get it? The man who goes in that spirit will always get something on which to rest his conscience. So he said to the brethren, "I don't know what else I can do to make a living just now, and you know the Bible says, "He that provideth not for his own household has denied the faith and become worse than an infidel." He was very particular, you see, to comply with one requirement, one that suited him, regardless of how many he violated in doing it.

I once had occasion to talk to a young lady who had professed faith in Christ, about her extreme worldliness. I tried to impress her with the fact that she could not expect the divine favor while her heart was thus filled with the world. But she let me know that she had positive assurance that she was in possession of divine life. She had the word of God for it: "We know that we have passed from death unto life," she said, "because we love the brethren." I love the brethren—several of them—hence I have God's word for it that I am all right." You smile at this; but I ask, have you never trifled with the word of God in just about as silly and wicked a way?

It is a grand thing for one to have faith enough, and honesty enough, in his dealings with God, to square his life in every respect by God's word. To

be perfectly willing to let the word speak for itself, with no disposition to bend it into the favor of this or that which is dear to our heart, is the highest manifestation of a life at one with God. It is a royal life that one thus lives by the faith of the Son of God.

Those who study the word of God intelligently, interpret it by rules, either of their own making, or that of others. And a man who is honest with God and his own soul, will never use a rule of interpretation in one case that he is not willing to abide by all the way through. When one says "this passage proves my position," he should be able to give the rule by which he works in reaching that conclusion. He should then abide the consequences of that rule wherever applied. If he is not willing to do this, he should abandon it entirely. But if he holds to it where it suits his purpose, and discards it where it doesn't work to suit him, he is dishonest with God and His word. And this is the great trouble of this age, both in regard to the plan of salvation, and the duties of the Christian life. In all our discussions with sectarianism, if both parties would agree to formulate every rule of interpretation used, and never use one in any case that he was not willing to abide by in every case, such discussions would be of short duration. The side of truth would be manifest at once. And yet this is just precisely what every honest man should be willing to do, and will do, whenever his will is perfectly merged into the divine will, so that his only desire is to know the divine mind in every case, that he may do it. Only the man who is willing to let one expression of God's will hold him in



complete subjection, regardless of the clamorings of self-will and self-interest, is wholly free from the doctrine of Balaam, and its pernicious consequences.

But, to conclude, we return to the history of Balaam. Balaam went into the country of Balak, and Balak took him to a high place where he could see the armies of Israel on the distant plains, and he built seven altars and offered seven sacrifices. And as the smoke of the sacrifices ascended towards heaven, he lifted up his voice and tried to curse Israel. But God controlled his tongue, and he pronounced a blessing. They then went to the top of Pisgah, and repeated the sacrifices. And again his tongue pronounced a blessing. Then they went to the top of Peor, with the same result. Then Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he drove him from his presence without honor and without reward. Balaam now realized that all was lost. He had trifled with God and forfeited His favor. He had sold himself for reward, and lost it. He had sought honor at the price of loyalty to God, and it was gone. All was now lost, and he was a ruined man. When Balaam stood on one of the high places of Baal, and beheld the hosts of Israel in the plains below, he lifted up his prophetic voice—prophetic of his own remorseful wailings and miserable end—and gave vent to his feelings. He predicted the prosperity of Israel and the peaceful end of Jacob. Then he adds: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Poor man! Was this prayer ever answered? How died righteous Israel? How dies the righteous man now? Usually at home, in the midst of friends; his every want anticipated. But at home or abroad, loved

and honored, he pillows his head upon the bosom of Jesus, and waits the summons to call him home. He listens for the rustle of angels' wings, and looks for their gathering about his couch. Oh, blessed hour! My soul leaps forward at the thought! How soon do I hope to realize it! When the Master's work is done; God speed the day!

But how died Balaam? He died as the dog dieth. Unwept, unhonored, his unburied carcass lay putrid on the field of blood. The once honored prophet of God became food for vultures. He who entertained the princes of Moab now makes a feast for jackals. The man who once spoke by the Spirit of God, has no friendly hand to lay him in a pauper's grave. The prince of God, of whom Balak could truthfully say, "I know that whom thou blessest is blest, and whom thou cursest is cursed," dies in shame and disgrace, cast out and condemned by God and man. Such are the rewards of iniquity. Such the consequences of the doctrine of Balaam.

## SERMON IV.

## THE BEGINNING.

“Then opened he their mind, that they might understand the scriptures; and he said unto them, Thus is it written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”—*Luke* xxiv: 46-49.

“And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning.”—*Acts* xi: 15.

WHILE the religious world is unfortunately divided over many things, it is happily united in many others. And fortunately, as a rule, the things on which we are agreed are of more importance than those on which we differ. We are very generally agreed on the great essential features of Christianity. We are agreed that certain things are essential to Christianity; that without these it could not exist. The Church of Christ, in its primitive purity, is simply the embodiment of Christianity. Consequently every essential feature of Christianity is found in the Church of the New Testament. We are all agreed that certain things are essential to the existence of that Church. We are agreed that if one of these essential features were absent, the Church could not exist. It may seem strange that there is such perfect agreement in these matters, while there is such diversity in others. To these we first invite your careful attention.

Should one come into this country, claiming to be a preacher of the Gospel, he would be required to be-

lieve and teach certain essential truths, else he could not obtain recognition or fellowship in any church of any orthodox denomination in the land. He would be required to believe and teach—

1. *That Christ died for our sins.* No orthodox church in Christendom will tolerate for a moment any man as a minister of the Church of God who does not so believe and so teach. This you know to be true.

Then he must believe and teach—

2. *That Christ was buried and rose again from the dead.* No man not believing and teaching this could find recognition in any church in our land.

In addition to this, he must believe and teach—

3. *That Christ ascended to heaven, and has been coronated both King and Lord.* This fact is held sacred by the whole believing world. No man who believes in Jesus, believes for a moment that Christianity could exist without this fact. No body of men not holding it as an item of faith, could be regarded as any part of the Church of God.

Before this preacher could be recognized by any orthodox party in the world, he must also believe and teach—

4. *That after His coronation Christ sent the Holy Spirit as His Advocate, to consummate the work of redemption.*

However much the religious world may differ as to the work of the Spirit, there is no difference as to this fact. We all hold alike that this grand fact is essential to the existence of the Church. However grand a preacher might be, and his piety unquestioned, let him not believe this, and he would be excluded from the fellowship of any evangelical denomination in Christendom.

He must, furthermore, believe and teach—

5. *That baptism is by the authority of Jesus Christ.*

Differ as we do in regard to baptism in other respects, we are unanimously agreed that baptism administered by the authority of Moses, of John the Baptist, or any one else, would be of no value. Only He who said, "All *authority* in heaven and on earth is given unto me; go ye, *therefore*, and teach all nations, *baptizing* them," is recognized as the authority for baptizing any one. It was because of this authority that the command was given—"go ye, *therefore*." No church in Christendom, of which we know anything, recognizes anything as baptism that is not held to be by the authority of Jesus.

The preacher must also believe and teach—

6. *That baptism is in [into] the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*

The religious world will tolerate nothing as baptism not administered in these sacred names. Whatever any one calls baptism, must recognize this trinity, into union with which the act brings us. However much we differ as to the subject, the action and the design of baptism, we are of one mind as to its being administered in these holy names.

Further, the preacher must believe and teach—

7. *That salvation is in the name of Jesus Christ.* The world recognizes "repentance and remission of sins" in no other name but that of Jesus. It is the only name under heaven in which salvation is offered to men. "And in none other is there salvation; for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved." Hence this preacher of whom we are speaking would

have to preach "repentance and remission of sins"—in other words, salvation—in the name of Jesus Christ; else no party in Christendom would regard him as preaching the Gospel by which the Church of God is built up and maintained.

These essential items might be increased; but these seven are sufficient. They are universally held to be essential to the existence of the Church, an account of which we have in the New Testament. So true is this, that if a body of people were found claiming to be a church—either the Church of the Bible, or a "branch" of it—that did not believe and practice *every one of them*, they would be promptly repudiated by every religious sect of the nineteenth century.

Since it is universally conceded that the Church of the Bible can not exist without these items, it follows that it has never existed without them. That which is essential to the Church's existence now, has ever been essential. You can not change the essential elements without *changing the thing*. So the *thing* of which we are now inquiring never existed without that which is now essential to its existence. It follows, therefore, that just so far back in the world's history as we can find these essential items, we can find the Church to which they are essential. Beyond this we can not go. It is folly to talk about finding the Church beyond the point of finding every one of these essential elements. Then the question is, How far back in the world's history can these facts be found? In order to find the beginning of the Church, we have simply to find the beginning of these essential elements.

Men speak of the Church in the days of Moses, of



Abraham, and even of Adam, as flippantly as if it were a mentioned institution in that part of Old Testament history. When the simple fact is that the word never occurs once in the entire Jewish Scriptures. The Bible that the world had in the days of the Son of God, contained not the word. It must be admitted that if there was a church in those days, it had preachers, and they believed and taught the distinctive and fundamental principles of the church. We inquire, then, were these essential items of which I have spoken, *or any one of them*, believed and taught at that time? If one of them was, which one? Not one of them then existed. Not a man on earth believed or taught one of them. Hence, if a church then existed, it existed without its members believing and practicing these things. But these are essential to the Church of God, whose history we have in the Bible. It follows, therefore, that if a church existed then, it was not the Church of which the Bible speaks.

It is often argued that the Church was established in the days of John, and that he was its first preacher. But, we inquire, which one of these essential items did John believe and teach? Did he teach that Christ died for our sins? He did not. And he was just as far from teaching the other six. He preached repentance and remission of sins, but not in the name of Jesus Christ. We not only find these absent from his teaching, but Christ says in our text that they were to be preached in His name *after His death*, and *beginning at Jerusalem*. John had neither the time nor the place, therefore, at which this was to begin. If it was preached by John or any one else previous to Christ's death, then it did not begin at Jerusalem after His

death. But He said the latter was to be the case. Hence the former is false.

John baptized, but not by the authority of Jesus, nor into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These two are all that any one would think of finding in John's ministry, and these were as foreign to it as the rest.

No one can get into any Baptist church now without believing every one of these seven items. But John did not believe, teach, nor practice one of them. Hence if he were on earth to-day, preaching and practicing just what he did in the days of Jesus, he would not be received into any Baptist church in America! The same is true of Abraham and Moses and all the rest. Not a Pedobaptist church on earth to-day would give them membership! Yet, according to their claims, these men were great lights in their church; and John had the peculiar honor of being the first Baptist preacher, and of baptizing Jesus into the Baptist church!! These were all distinguished preachers, called and sent, of a church never once mentioned in the first four thousand years of the world's history, which included the life and death of the last one of them! If "the first Baptist preacher," the one that had the distinguished honor of baptizing Jesus, were to sit at the Lord's table, in this year of grace, in some prominent Baptist church in Kentucky, the woods would ring with howls of condemnation, and the very air would smell of heresy!

Since these items are essential to the existence of the Church, and since they are all located this side of Christ's death and suffering, we are compelled to look this side for the establishment of the Church. Then,

at what point this side of Christ's death do we find these items?

On the first Pentecost after the resurrection we find *all* of them present. Not only so, but we find them present for the *first time* in the history of the world. On this day, in the city of Jerusalem, at a great national feast, in the presence of the very people that had, in the same place, crucified the Son of God just fifty-two days before, these things were all officially announced. It was announced that Christ died for our sins. They were assured that His death was not an accident, but was according to the divine purpose; that His life was not taken by force, but He laid it down voluntarily. It was a free-will offering for sin. This grand philosophy of his death, which underlies all our faith and hope, was there and then announced for the first time. It was a fundamental fact in the "glorious Gospel of the blessed God," proclaimed to the ends of the earth, "beginning at Jerusalem."

Here it was officially announced for the first time, that Christ rose from the dead. It was declared that He could not be "holden of death;" for it was a matter of prophecy that His soul should not be left in hades, nor His flesh see corruption. Peter declared that Christ had risen according to the Scriptures, and that they, the Apostles, were all witnesses of the fact. This was the first announcement to the world of these glorious facts.

In the same sermon it was first announced that Jesus, whom they had crucified, had been coronated King and Lord. The world had never heard of this before.

He also announced that Christ had sent the Holy Spirit, according to promise, to inspire the Apostles,

and to thus advocate His claims. This precious truth, now so dear to the hearts of God's children, had never before been proclaimed to the world.

"Repentance and remission of sins" were then proclaimed "in the name of Jesus Christ." Christ told His Apostles, in our text, that after His death, and in Jerusalem, this new doctrine was to begin. He further told them to remain in the city till that time, and they should receive power from on high. They waited; they have received the power, being baptized in the Holy Spirit. They have the *time* and the *place*; hence when sinners inquire what they shall do to be saved, Peter says: "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins." Here, then, were repentance and remission of sins in the name of Christ proclaimed just as He had directed them. Here was salvation in the name of Jesus proclaimed for the first time. That the repentance as well as the baptism is in the name of Christ, is evident from the natural construction, from the fact that salvation is in His name, and repentance is an essential part of it, and that He had stated to them in the commission, that "repentance" as well as "remission of sins," was to be in His name. Not the preaching simply, but the thing preached, was to be in His name.

Then they that received the word were baptized. This was the first baptism under the commission. Of course it was as the commission directed. Hence they were the first baptisms by the authority of Christ as He gave it in the commission, and into the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as it requires.

Here, then, we have present, all in one day, every

one of these essential items; and each is for the first time in the history of the race. It is as clear as demonstration can make it, therefore, that the Church to whose existence they are essential, was then and there established. (See Acts, chapter ii.)

We reach the same conclusion by another line of argument. Some years after the events of this Pentecost, the same Apostle who here first announced the way of life to the Jews, was specially called to preach the same salvation to the Gentiles. While giving an account of it to the other Apostles, who complained because he had gone to the Gentiles, he says: "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning." Here he refers to a time in the past when the Holy Spirit fell on them, and calls it the beginning. What time was that? There is no time recorded in their history when the Holy Spirit fell on them, except the day of Pentecost. Here we have an account of that fact. But to make this doubly sure, he connects the one with the other: "And I remembered the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit." Here he refers to Christ's promise made to them before He left them, recorded in the first chapter of Acts: "And, being assembled together with them, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, ye heard from me: for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence." Here they were directed to be at the time and place designated for the beginning of their inspired work under the commission. They were promised baptism

in the Holy Spirit at that time, which was then only a few days in the future. They received the baptism according to promise. This was on the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit came upon them and overwhelmed them in His divine power. To this Peter now refers, for the falling of the Spirit on the Gentiles reminds him of it, and he quotes this Scripture. Hence, the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit thus fell upon them, he calls "*the beginning*." It is important to inquire, "the beginning" of what?

When the careful Bible student notes the many important features of the scheme of redemption which had their beginning on this Pentecost, he is amazed at the importance of this one day's events in the redemption of the race. The second chapter of Acts is the Constitution of the dispensation of Christ, as the twentieth chapter of Exodus is that of the dispensation of Moses. The various conflicting theories giving rise to a divided Christendom, have their origin mainly in a non-observance of the fact, that every distinctive feature of the economy of grace had its beginning on this day. To make these things specific, I ask you to consider them with me separately. But, as so much is involved in the issues of this day, perhaps it would be well to give a word of explanation of the day itself.

Pentecost is from the Greek word *pentecoste*. It means the fiftieth. Hence the day of Pentecost was the fiftieth day. But the fiftieth day from what? The fiftieth day from "the morrow after the Sabbath" of the Passover week. (See Lev. xxiii: 15, 16.) The "morrow after the Sabbath" was the first day of the week. Hence this day always fell on Sunday. It was



one of the great national feasts of the Jews, held annually. It was a season of thankfulness for the ingathered harvest. The harvest began with the Passover, and now, in fifty days, it has been gathered in. On "the morrow after the Sabbath" of the Passover at which Christ was crucified, He rose from the dead. Hence this Pentecost was fifty days from the resurrection, and fifty-two from the crucifixion. Remember these facts; for we shall have use for them. Hence the hosts of Israel that had assembled at the preceding Passover, when Christ was put to death as a malefactor, are again assembled at the Pentecostal feast. Here, at the same place, and before the same people that witnessed His condemnation, begin the wonderful events of His vindication.

On this day—the Lord's day—ten days after Christ's ascension, began a number of distinctive features that culminate in the completion of the remedial system. These we shall notice in the following order:

1. *The day of Pentecost was the beginning of the Church of God.*

This has been already demonstrated. Hence I shall add nothing more in proof of that proposition.

2. *It was the beginning of the Kingdom of God.*

The Church, in its broadest sense, includes all of God's children. Christ is its head, and it is His body. In this comprehensive sense of the word, the Church and the Kingdom are generally held to mean the same. They are the same institution under different figures. The terms of admission into one, are those of admission into the other. Hence various creeds quote the language of Christ to Nicodemus concerning entrance into the Kingdom of God, as authority for their terms

of admission into the Church. When Christ said to Peter, "On this rock I will build my church," of which building, as a work, He made Peter foreman, He immediately adds, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." We infer from His language, that the one was inseparable from the other. In anything represented under different figures, the figures differ in some respects, while the thing they represent is the same. Since kingdom and church are but different terms, in their ordinary use, to designate the same thing, the beginning of the one was the beginning of the other. Therefore, since the day of Pentecost was the beginning of the Church, it was the beginning of the kingdom.

During the earthly life of the Savior, the kingdom was continually represented as "at hand," "near at hand," "drawing nigh," etc. This continued till the last conversation of Jesus with the Apostles. Then when He spoke of the events of the approaching Pentecost, they say: "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" They understood that the kingdom of which He had spoken so much, had not yet been established. The kingdom was preached in its *principles* in the days of Christ, but never existed in fact, as an accomplished institution, till its King was coronated as such on the throne of His glory. After Pentecost the kingdom is universally recognized as existing in fact. The language concerning it, like that concerning the Church, undergoes a radical change at that time. "The beginning," then, of which Peter speaks, is the beginning of the Kingdom of God. It began on Pentecost.

3. *It was the beginning of the Will of God.*

The expression, "the will of God," is used in two distinct senses in the Bible. It and kindred expressions, are generally used to express the divine mind, the desire and purposes of God. But it is also used in a documentary sense. A man expresses his will every day of his life in regard to various things. At death he leaves a document called his will. In this documentary will, he expresses his will in regard to many things. So the documentary will of God contains expressions of His will in regard to all matters on which He has seen fit to reveal it. It is in this documentary sense that the word "will" is used in the above affirmation. The will of God, in one sense, as regards man, began in expression and enforcement, when He first spoke to Adam. His last will, in a documentary sense, began on the day of Pentecost.

In this sense, the will of God is equivalent to the "New Testament." The nice distinction between covenant and testament is happily preserved in the Revised Version, in Heb. ix: 15-19. The New Testament is the documentary will of Christ, and the will of God through Christ, to whom He gave all authority. It contains the will of Christ in the exercise of His Lordly authority. Not a line of it was written when Christ went home to heaven. It was written afterwards by men guided into all the truth by the Holy Spirit. The Divine Spirit received from Christ on His throne that which He imparted to the writers and speakers. Hence what they said was the expression of His mind. On the day of Pentecost this communication between the throne of Christ and the hearts of men began, and through it the entire New Testa-

ment was given. What Jesus had previously spoken that He wished recorded, He brought to the minds of the Apostles in this way by the Holy Spirit.

Paul tells us that the will of Christ, as a document, could not go into force till after His death. This is the case with men, and His was governed by the same principles. After His death, His will, with all its provisions, had to be carried out, by His executors. What they knew of His mind during life had nothing to do with His documentary will after death. He told them the conditions on which salvation would be offered in His will, but told them to say nothing about it, till they were inspired by the Spirit from on high. Then they should begin its proclamation. This came with Pentecost, and with this began their work as executors. Hence, not a condition of the will on which the inheritance is promised, extends beyond that day. On that day the multitude was assured that Jesus had been coronated King and Lord, and that henceforth His will had to be observed, for His word was law. Hence "the beginning" referred to by the Apostle, includes the beginning of the Will of God through Christ.

4. *It was the beginning of the mission of the Holy Spirit as the Advocate of Christ.*

Before He left them, Christ promised the Apostles that He would send the Holy Spirit to be His Advocate. That, as such, He would convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment—of sin for not believing on Christ; of the righteousness of Christ, because God had raised Him from the dead; of judgment because Christ had judged (conquered) the prince of this world (Satan), and would judge the world in

the final day. The Divine Spirit was to inspire the Apostles, and through them speak to the world, convincing them that Christ was now their King and Lord, their Mediator and Redeemer. These precious promises were made on the night of the betrayal, and recorded in John xv and xvi. According to the Savior's statement, the Holy Spirit was not to begin His work as Advocate till after Christ went to the Father. In doing this He was to speak through the Apostles, convict men of sin, and cause them to accept the Christ. All who have ever believed on Christ have believed through this testimony. This work began on the day of Pentecost. Hence "the beginning" of Peter, includes also the beginning of the mission of the Holy Spirit as the Divine Advocate of Christ.

5. *The day of Pentecost was the beginning of the mission of the Holy Spirit as the Indweller and Comforter of saints.*

In a sense the Spirit has ever been with men. It brooded over Nature at the dawn of creation. Holy men of God were guided by the Spirit in the days of past dispensations. But yet there was a sense, and a very precious one, in which "the Spirit was not yet given" while as yet Christ was not glorified. "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believed on Him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified." (John vii: 37-39.) It follows, therefore, that the Holy Spirit as an inward strengthener

and comforter, was, like His mission as Advocate, made to depend on the glorification of Jesus. Of course, then, this relationship of the Spirit to the children of God, could not exist till after Christ ascended to the Father. Hence before Pentecost the Spirit was not thus given. After Pentecost He is spoken of as having been thus given. An inspired Apostle says: "And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him." (Acts v: 32.) Now, between these two short periods this sacred relation must have had a beginning. On the day of Pentecost, Peter said to those convicted of sin by the Divine Spirit as an Advocate: "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The "gift of the Holy Spirit" was the Holy Spirit as a gift. Here, then, the Spirit is promised to those who should obey the Savior. This was not a promise of any of the miraculous endowments of the Spirit, such as those given to the Apostles and the household of Cornelius, or bestowed by the imposition of hands. Such gifts had to do with the Spirit's *advocacy*. They were for the purpose of convincing others of the Messiahship of Jesus. Hence they were not thus connected with obedience and remission of sins, as antecedents and consequents. Of such gifts Paul says, "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to the unbelieving." But this pertained to the gracious indwelling of the Spirit, as a comforter. "And because ye are sons God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." The Holy Spirit is a



Divine Guest that abides with God's children. What He does as Comforter, Intercessor, and Strengtheners of our infirmities, and how He does it, are matters on which we propose not now to speculate. We simply accept the facts as given us. We walk by faith, not by philosophy.\* It is a relation of the Holy Spirit accepted and appreciated by God's people generally. It was announced first by Peter in his famous speech on Pentecost. Hence "the beginning" of which he speaks, includes the beginning of the mission of the Holy Spirit as the Indweller and Comforter of saints.

6. *It was the beginning of the Priesthood of Christ.*

In the scheme of redemption there have been three distinct priesthoods: the Patriarchal, the Aaronic, and the Christian. It is through the priesthood, and through it only, that men can worship God in any dispensation. Each dispensation has had its high priest, as well as its common priests. Paul teaches that all Christians are priests, and that Christ is their High Priest. Through Him we make our offerings to God: "Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest that can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. iv: 14, 15.) It is only through Christ, as High Priest, that we worship. "Having a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in fullness of faith." This High Priesthood of Jesus, through which we make all our offerings to God, did not begin till after He ascended to the Father. Only the tribe of Levi could be priests according to the law. Christ was of the

tribe of Judah, "of whom no man gave attendance at the altar." Hence He could not have been a priest during His earthly ministry. Consequently, Paul says: "Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law." Since the worship is through the priesthood, a change in the priesthood demands a change in the law concerning the worship. Hence Paul says: "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law." Christ could not be a priest while on the earth. He became High Priest after ascending to the Father. With this change the law of worship, and hence the law of pardon, changed. This change was made on the day of Pentecost, for on this day the new law of life *through Him* was first proclaimed to the children of men. Hence "the beginning" of the Apostle Peter includes the beginning of the Priesthood of Christ.

7. *The day of Pentecost was the beginning of the Mediatorship of Christ.*

The Mediatorship of Christ is thus expressed by Paul: "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all." It is through Him as Mediator that we have access to the Father. "No man," He says, "can come unto the Father but by me." Man can not approach God directly. He comes into His presence and pleads His favor through a Mediator. This Mediator has made Himself the companion of men in their deepest poverty and fleshly weakness. He is also equal with God in His divinity and holiness. Man is enabled to come with an humble boldness, therefore; not because of what he is, but

because of what his Mediator is. Through Him men are reconciled to God. Through Him they appear in the person of their Mediator; without Him they stand in their own personality. He was perfected as Mediator by His suffering and death. He did not begin to mediate till men were prepared by inspiration to speak in His stead. Hence the Apostle says: "We are ambassadors, therefore, on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God." This work of the Apostles, of pleading with men, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God, began on the day of Pentecost. Hence "the beginning," of our text, includes also the beginning of the Mediatorship of Christ.

8. *It is the beginning of the New Covenant.*

The new covenant was a matter of prophecy. Jeremiah said: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah." This new covenant was the culmination of God's spiritual promise to Abraham. The essential features in which it differed from the covenant made with Israel is that, in this, God's law is in the mind and engraved upon the heart of all in the covenant, while in that with Judah many did not know the Lord. Infants were in that fleshly covenant, but only those who know and love the Lord are in this. In this covenant the law was to go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. After the resurrection was the time, and Jerusalem the place, according to the Savior's own interpretation of the prophet, when the new law was to go forth from Zion. God made the appointment Himself, by the mouth of His holy prophet, nearly seven

hundred years before, and, when the time drew near, Jesus selected a man to fill it. The sermon of Peter on the day of Pentecost was in fulfillment of an appointment of near seven hundred years' standing. Hence "the beginning" to which he alludes is also the beginning of the new covenant.

9. *The day of Pentecost was the beginning of the Christian Dispensation.*

In the scheme of redemption we have had three dispensations: Patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian. These have been represented by Adam, Moses, and Christ. Each dispensation had its peculiar priesthood, ordinances, and worship. The worship that was acceptable under one, was never so under another. Men once offered animal sacrifices acceptable to God; but now such would excite His deep displeasure. The Christian dispensation is a dispensation of grace. It is the dispensation of Christ. He is the divine Lawgiver; the Prophet and Priest; the coronated King and Lord. It is His government, and all authority is given into His hands. This Lordship, this government, this exercise of authority, this obedience to Him as Lord of the conscience, through whom is enjoyed the remission of sins, and gift of the Holy Spirit, began on the day of Pentecost. Hence "the beginning" of that day means also the beginning of the Christian dispensation.

10. *It was the beginning of the Lordship of Jesus.*

The meek and lowly Nazarene is accepted by His followers as the Lord of glory. And while in this world some men will say, "We will not have this man Christ Jesus to rule over us," the time is coming when "every knee shall bow and every tongue shall

confess that Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." The Lordship of Jesus implies implicit obedience to Him in every expression of His will. The will of the Lord is supreme. His word is law. It is His to command, and the duty of His subjects to obey. Hence He said to the Pharisees: "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" He therefore makes the difference between doing and not doing what He says, the difference between a wise man and a fool. The earthly mission of Jesus was preparatory to His Lordship. When He ascended to the Father to receive His crown, the Psalmist thus describes His approach to the gates of the eternal world: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." "Who is this King of glory?" the ranks of angels shout back. "The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory." No sooner was He crowned Lord of all than He sent forth the Spirit, as He promised, to convey His message as Lord of the universe to the children of men. Hence the Apostle said: "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ." Thus on this day His Lordship began. From that day He has been King of kings and Lord of lords. All authority in heaven and on earth is His; and to Him the nations must bow, and the souls of men surrender their authority. This "beginning," then, was also the beginning of the Lordship of Christ.

11. *The day of Pentecost was the beginning of the Administration of Jesus.*

The administration of Christ is one in which He rules

as King and Lord; in which He is the Lawgiver and Supreme Director of His subjects. It involves His Mediatorship, his Priesthood, the agency of the Holy Spirit as His Advocate. All these had their beginning on that day; hence on that day He began His administration. From that day He has occupied the throne, with all authority His, and He will thus administer the affairs of the divine government till He comes to judge the world. Hence "the beginning" of this day includes the beginning of the administration of Jesus.

12. *Finally, the day of Pentecost was the beginning of the "Great Salvation."*

Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, urges that we neglect not "the great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." Since Christ at first began to speak this, it follows that it was not spoken by any one before Him. Hence neither Abraham, Moses, nor John, ever spoke this great salvation. Christ began to speak it, and it was afterwards spoken by others. He first spoke it to those who confirmed it to us. Those who confirmed it to us were the Apostles. Hence to these Christ first spoke it. This He did in the commission. It was a salvation such as the world had never before heard. It was a salvation of the soul from sin. Hitherto there had been no absolute remission; but now sins once remitted are remembered no more forever. It was by virtue of the blood of Jesus, and *in His name*. Its reality, its conditions, and its promises were all new. This salvation in the name of Jesus, as we have seen, began on the day of Pentecost. This was its first announcement to the world. Hence



"the beginning" to which Peter refers is the beginning of the great salvation.

The religious world has been filled with confusion of thought because of disregarding the fact that all these grand features in the Christian system had their beginning on the day of Pentecost. The majority of the features in the various forms of sectarianism, both Catholic and Protestant, have their origin beyond that day. They come from a previous dispensation and priesthood. If, in framing their theology, the religious world would bear in mind the above facts, and go to "*the beginning*," and not beyond it, for all the features of their religion, there would be little room for divisions and conflicts. Let us take one item as a sample: The doctrine of justification by faith only goes beyond the day of Pentecost for its main support. During the life of Jesus, and before, men were saved without baptism. Hence they conclude that it is not now a condition of remission. The case of the penitent thief is ever at hand to show that salvation is not dependent on baptism. Now, it should be remembered that the thief died fifty-two days before it was ever the duty of any one to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and before the promise of salvation was thus connected with baptism. The commission of Christ to His chosen Apostles, authorizing baptism in His name, with the promise that "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved," was not then given. It had not then become the law of heaven. Not till the day of Pentecost were men required by divine authority to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. Because Christ saved the penitent thief without baptism, fifty-two days be-

fore He made baptism a condition of salvation, is no reason that He will thus save one now, since the law requiring men to be baptized has gone into force. Abraham and Moses were saved without baptism, because it was not then required. So of all God's faithful servants in those dispensations. But that is no reason He will save them without it now, since it is now required of men, in the name of the Lord Jesus, by the authority of the great Head of the Church and Lord of the universe. Our salvation depends on doing the will of the Lord; and it is now His will, and has been since the day of Pentecost, that we shall accept Him as the Christ, be baptized in His name, and consecrate our lives to His holy service. Accepting Him as Lord, we must do what He says.

It follows, therefore, that in every department of the faith—the conditions of admission into the Church, its worship, its organization, its government—we should go to Pentecost as the beginning. From that divine starting point, under the direction of the inspired record, we can re-establish every feature of the Church to-day just as it was in the days of the Apostles. If we go to this divinely appointed beginning, and follow the directions as we find them in the precepts and examples of inspired teachers, we will reproduce in the nineteenth century the Church of God just as He would have it exist. He established it then just as He desired it; for had He wished it otherwise, He would have made it otherwise. Hence, when we reproduce its every feature now as they were then, we make it just as the Divine Father and loving Savior would have us make it. It must be admitted by all right thinking people that the Church now should be

in all respects as God made it. This can be done only by beginning where the divine directory begins, and following it as the Spirit of inspiration gave it. Let us, then, in spirit and in form, re-establish and perpetuate the kingdom of God among men, and the reign of the Divine King in their souls, as they were at first, *beginning at Jerusalem.*

## SERMON V.

## THE GREAT SALVATION.

“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? which having at the first been spoken by the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will.”—*Heb. ii: 1-4.*

THIS text, you will observe, is introduced by the word “therefore.” It is a conclusion drawn from preceding premises. These are found in the preceding chapter. On account of the facts stated in the first chapter, we should give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard. In order to see the significance of these facts and the force of this conclusion, we must consider the circumstances under which, and the purposes for which, this epistle was written.

For reasons which I can not now give, I accept Paul as the author of this epistle. At the time it was written a large element of the Jews seem to have been on the eve of apostasy. Their brethren who had not accepted Christ, were exerting all their powers to induce them to abandon Christianity and go back again to the religion of Moses. This effort was not free from persecution, though the believers “had not yet resisted unto blood.” (xii: 4.) It appears from the epistle that their adversaries were wont to argue after this

style: The religion of Moses is ancient. It was the religion of our fathers. That it was from heaven, is conceded even by those who have abandoned it. God is the author of it. He set His seal upon it. Our fathers and mothers died in it, and God gathered them to Abraham's bosom. This religion of Jesus is a new thing. It is in controversy. The great masses believe Him to be an impostor. Why should you abandon the old—the religion of your fathers, that has never been in controversy by the descendants of Jacob—for a new and controverted religion?

This plea of itself was one of immense power. It took human nature on its weak side. Even in this age it has been used effectually to blind men to the truth as it is in Christ. Often when one is inclined to accept the simple Gospel apart from all denominational alliances, he is reminded that his parents were good Methodists, Baptists, or of some denomination, and his change would be a reflection on them. They were good people, and went home to heaven; why, then, can he not go to heaven in the same way? By abandoning the church of his parents, he condemns them, and implies that they are lost. Such reasoning has had an almost boundless influence. It has kept thousands from accepting the truth as they have plainly seen it on the sacred page. When argument fails, this appeal to the weakness of human nature is the final resort. But with all its force, it is a miserable sophism. The position is false. It is not true that in the abandonment of a denomination for the simple, undenominational Christianity of the New Testament, one reflects on the religion of his parents who died in that faith. After Luther abandoned Catholicism, a priest

tried the same plea upon him. He said, "Luther, do you not believe that your father and mother were good people, and went home to heaven?" "I certainly hope so," was Luther's reply. "Well," said the priest, "if they went to heaven through the Catholic church, why can you not go to heaven the same way?" "While," said Luther, "my parents may have gone to heaven through the Catholic church, I can not. I have learned the will of God as they never learned it. And as I have better knowledge of the way of life, I must accept the truth as I understand it. Hence what may have saved my parents will not save me; for I know better, while they did not." And thus it is to-day. Thousands of people, by force of different circumstances, have learned more of the truth than their parents knew; hence they can not be saved in the sect of their parents. Their parents were governed by the truth as they understand it. They must do the same. They understand it differently. Hence they must occupy a different position.

If the people in the days of the Savior and the ages following had done as thousands of preachers now persuade people to do—to hold fast the religion of their fathers, regardless of their increased opportunities of knowing the truth—what would have been the result? The religion of Jesus would have never found its way to the hearts of men. The Jews would have held fast their Judaism, and the Gentiles their paganism; for thus did their fathers. The mission of Jesus, therefore, would have failed, and the world would have been left in hopeless ruin. Such is the folly, not to say wickedness, of such a plea.

The Epistle to the Hebrews was written to check



this tendency to apostasy, and to re-establish them in their faith. It contrasts Judaism and Christianity, showing that one is typical of the other, and that we are to give up the shadow for the substance. The Apostle, like the old master of logic which he was, begins with a refutation of the special plea of the unbelieving Jews to unsettle the faith of their brethren who had accepted Christianity. He says: "I grant you that God in olden times spake unto our fathers by the prophets. He honored the religion of Moses by communicating His will concerning it through both men and angels. But He who thus spake in the days of hoary-headed Judaism, hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by His Son." He then proceeds to establish the superiority of Him who has thus spoken unto us, over angels. The fact that God had communicated with their fathers through angels was their chief argument to prove the excellency of the message. Stephen charged them that they had "received the law as it was ordained by angels, and kept it not." Hence the necessity of proving the superiority of our Messenger over angels, in order to the superiority of His message, and a refutation of their argument. He says that He by whom God has now spoken to us is heir of all things; by Him God made the worlds; He is the effulgence of the Father's glory, and the express image of His substance. He is better than the angels, in that He has obtained a more excellent name than they. God never said to an angel, "Thou art my Son." Never to the tallest that burned in His presence did He say, "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son." But thus has He spoken to and of the One who has spoken unto us in these last days. And when Jesus was brought

into the world to execute this great mission, God said, "Let all the angels of God worship him." Hence the angels that were messengers in giving the religion to our fathers, *worship* Him who has spoken unto us in these last days. The superiority of the worshiped over the worshiper is conceded and great. God says of angels, they are His messengers, as are the winds and the flames; but of the Son He says, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Here the term "O God," applied to the Son, expresses His deity. He is also enthroned, and wields the scepter of righteousness over an everlasting kingdom. He has, therefore, "been anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows"—above angels or men. To which of the angels did God say at any time, "Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies the foot-stool of thy feet?" But thus He spoke to Him who in these last days has spoken unto us. Therefore, on account of this wonderful superiority of the Son of God, we should give the more earnest heed to the things which He has spoken to us.

Your attention is now invited to the fact that this great salvation "at first began to be spoken by the Lord." Since it began at first to be spoken by Him, He was the first to speak it. Since He was the first to speak it, no one ever spoke it before Him. It follows, therefore, that this great salvation did not extend back into the days of Adam, Abraham, Moses, or John. It was first spoken by the Lord. Hence, when men go back beyond the time when He began to speak it, and confound it with the religion of other days, they join together what God has put asunder. This obscures the way of salvation, and fills the world with confusion.

When did Christ begin to speak this great salvation? Was it when the multitudes gathered about Him in Judea and Galilee, so that He had to feed them miraculously to keep them from fainting by the wayside? One might so think; but it was not. At this period of the Master's ministry He talked *about* the great salvation, but the salvation itself He did not declare. Can we tell just when He did this? Let us see.

It is evident that He did not begin to speak the great salvation till He became the author of it. He could speak about it, as He did; but the salvation itself He could not speak till He became the author of it. He did not become the author of it till He was made perfect. He was not made perfect till He suffered. Paul tells us in the course of his argument that "it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. . . . And having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation." Here it is expressly stated that He did not become the author of this salvation till He was made perfect, and that He was not made perfect till He suffered; hence we are compelled to look this side of His suffering and death for the time that He began to speak the great salvation.

After His resurrection the interviews of Christ were exclusively with His disciples. He no longer gathered the great multitudes about Him and taught them concerning the kingdom of God. He was seen of above five hundred brethren at one time, but it was not to these, as we shall see, that He began to speak the great salvation. Paul says that those who heard Him

He first spoke it confirmed it unto us. Hence it we can ascertain who confirmed it to us, we shall know who heard Him when He first spoke it.

When Christ gave the commission to the eleven disciples, it was after His suffering; hence, after He was made perfect; therefore, after He became the author of this eternal salvation. In this He announced a salvation never before announced. He stated its character and its conditions. What He then stated was afterwards confirmed by the Apostles. They testified to the same salvation on the same conditions. Hence they were the ones who heard Him when He first announced the great salvation. It is also said that "they went forth and preached, God working with them and confirming the word with signs following." It is a settled matter, therefore, that Christ began to speak the great salvation when He gave the commission to His Apostles after His resurrection from the dead.

In the great commission Christ promises salvation on the conditions of faith, repentance, and baptism. When the Apostles, who heard Him, proclaimed this salvation to the world, beginning at Jerusalem, they asserted the same facts. They proclaimed it as a salvation from sin, in the name of Jesus Christ; and required faith, repentance, and baptism as its conditions. They thus confirmed the proclamation of the Master. When they went forth preaching salvation through Christ on these conditions, God enabled them to heal the sick, to cast out demons, and to raise the dead. This was evidence that God was with them approving their mission. Hence God confirmed the truth of the great salvation, and its conditions: "God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders,

and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will."

"For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" "The word spoken by angels" refers to the law and religion of Moses. If God dealt rigidly with them, and punished their every transgression and disobedience, how shall we escape, who are more highly favored with Gospel light, and whose responsibilities, therefore, are proportionately increased? An idea prevails in the sectarian world, that because we are under grace and not under the law, we are not so responsible for exact obedience. This is a mistaken and ruinous idea. While the divine requirements are not so exacting as they were under the law, there is no escape from what is required. Paul's idea is that our responsibility is increased, rather than diminished, by our enjoyment of salvation by grace. If God dealt rigidly with His people in a darker age, who enjoyed not our light and opportunities, how shall we escape if we neglect the duties imposed upon us? In order to see something of the force of this, let us take an instance of His dealings with Israel, as an illustration.

When the hosts of Israel drew near the promised land, Moses selected twelve men, one from each tribe, to go over and view the land. After forty days they returned and made their report. Ten of them brought in an evil report. They admitted that it was a goodly land; a land of fruits and pomegranates; a land that flowed with milk and honey, an expression figurative of its bountifulness; that in all respects it was such

a land as God had promised; but they were not able to possess it. In that land they saw great walled cities and mighty preparations for war; also great giants, before whom they appeared as mere grasshoppers. Hence they were unable to possess the land, now that they had come to it. Their report created great dissatisfaction in the camp, and aroused a spirit of rebellion. Caleb and Joshua returned, bearing a specimen of the fruit of the land. They gave a glowing report of it. They saw the same walled cities and the same mighty giants; but they were not discouraged. They trusted not in their own strength. They remembered that God had promised to go before them, to fight their battles for them, and to give them the land. Hence they reported in favor of an immediate going over and possessing the land. But the evil report of the ten had caused such a spirit of rebellion that they were deaf to the voice of faith and reason. In the bold oriental figures of that age, this aroused God's anger. He said to Moses, get out of the way and let me smite this people to the earth, that I may raise up a people that will honor me. Search the divine volume from side to side, and you will find nothing that so displeases the Almighty and arouses His indignation, as a want of trust or confidence in Him. And this is natural. Nothing is more dishonoring. Hence the favor which God bestows on them who have faith in Him; who take Him at His word, and trust Him for all He has promised.

Moses interceded and plead with God to spare the people this one time more. Through his pleadings God spared their lives, but said that not one of them responsible at this time, should ever enter the promised



land, save Caleb and Joshua. Hence for forty years they wandered in the wilderness. Their way was marked with their bleaching bones, till, when they again returned to the Jordan and viewed the land that lay beyond, the land promised to their father Abraham and his posterity, on which forty years before they turned their back—when they came again to view the long-promised inheritance, not one of the responsible ones, of the three millions that refused to go over forty years before, through a distrustfulness of God, was now living to reap the reward of faith, except Caleb and Joshua.

Again: When Moses failed to “sanctify God” in the eyes of Israel, when he brought water from the flinty rock, God said he should not enter the promised land. This was his death warrant. He did it as if the power was of himself, and failed to give the glory to God. This sin prevails to-day to an alarming extent. Men and institutions boast of what they do, but fail to do it in the name of the Lord, giving Him the glory. Even prayer in Masonic and other societies, is not in the name of Jesus. In this they not only fail to “sanctify Christ” in the eyes of the world, but ignore His positive law. For such a sin, not in a premeditated life, but under the excitement and impulse of the moment, God told Moses he should not enter the promised land. For near forty years more God and Moses were good friends. The Lord was with him and blessed him. Moses communed much with God, and God favored him as He has favored but few men. During all these years of familiarity and love, not an allusion was made to the death warrant of the past. Had you been Moses, would you not have felt hopeful that God



would forget it? Would you not have felt confident that these forty years of sweet association would cause Him to revoke the sentence? When again approaching the Jordan, knowing that the time had about expired, and that the crossing over was at hand, what would have been your anxiety to know "what God was going to do about it?" Would not joyous hopes have thrilled the soul as you contemplated the wondrous love and goodness of God; as you thought of His many acts of mercy and manifestations of His love? You talk now about trusting in His mercy and love when He has made no promise, and when you have had no manifestations of His favor in a life of sin. How, then, would you feel and talk, had you such familiar personal friendship with God as Moses had? But mark you the result: Moses was a hundred and twenty years of age. His eye was undimmed and his natural strength was unabated. He was yet in all the vigor of a glorious manhood. He was the honored leader of God's people, and was enshrined in their hearts. But God called him up to Pisgah's rugged heights, told him to look beyond and see the land promised to his fathers and to their posterity; view it southward and northward, and to the Great Sea beyond. To see for himself that the land of promise is not a land of myth or fiction, but a glorious reality. "And now, Moses, remember your conduct at the rock Horeb, and my promise. I will here gather you to your fathers, dig with my own hands your unknown grave, and lay your honored body away to rest!"

If in that age of darkness and shadows, "every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense

of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

The three dispensations have been happily compared to the starlight, the moonlight, and the sunlight ages of the world. During the patriarchal age, from Adam to Moses, the light of the way of life was as the faint glimmering of the distant stars. From Moses to Christ, the reflected light from the Christian system, was as the lifeless moonlight upon the path of God's chosen people. But when the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in His beams, He filled the world with light and life and glory. He gave to the world all the light it will ever have. In the fullness of this glorious midday splendor we now walk. If God held men to a strict account for every transgression of His will in those ages of borrowed and enfeebled light, how shall we escape, if in the fullness of the light of the perfect day of the world's redemption, we neglect this great salvation? We see, then, the increased responsibility under which we are brought to observe the requirements of the divine will. The fact that we are under grace, and not under the law, diminishes not an iota of our obligation to conform to the requirements of the divine will. The essential difference between law and Gospel is this: The law requires a perfect life, and makes no provision for pardon; while the Gospel requires obedience to the conditions of salvation in order to pardon. The law of Moses made provision for pardon only in a secondary sense. The pardon was not perfect and final; and even this was borrowed from the Gospel. It did not inhere in the law. Law is powerless to give life. "For if there

had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law."

We see, then, that this great salvation, with all its gracious provisions, was first announced by the Lord Jesus, after He arose from the dead. Therefore we may not go beyond His final commission for neither the nature nor the conditions of this salvation. How men were saved in the days of Abraham, Moses, or John, is another question. They were not included in the conditions of this salvation. It matters not to us how the penitent thief was saved; this great salvation, with its gracious provisions and its stipulated conditions, was first announced by the risen Lord, after the penitent thief was in a pauper's grave.

I would have you observe that the consequence of neglecting this great salvation is punishment after death; and the form of the question is a strong way of affirming that such will be the case. Hence this is no trivial matter. In the tenth chapter the Apostle says: "A man that hath set at nought Moses' law, dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" The man who has done this is worthy of sorer punishment, argues Paul, than was the man who set at nought the law of Moses. But the latter was put to death without mercy. Hence the man "who hath trodden under foot the Son of God," must be punished beyond death. Therefore those who neglect the great salvation, will reap the consequences in the eternal world.

But what is it to neglect this great salvation? I would have you observe that it is a very different thing from *rejecting* it. Of course those who reject it will receive the same condemnation as those who neglect it. But neglect brings it nearer home, and makes it a more serious matter to many of us. This epistle was not written to those who had rejected Christianity, but to those who were neglecting it more or less, and were, therefore, in danger of a rejection. Those who neglect the great salvation are those who have accepted it, but who are not living according to its requirements. The word implies a life of carelessness and indifference. Neglect always results in failure. This seems to be a fixed principle in nature. The doctor who neglects his practice and his studies; the lawyer who neglects his office and his clients; the teacher who neglects his school; the farmer who neglects his farm,—all inevitably fail. It is understood by all that failure must result. Should one avoid failure under the principle of neglect, it would be a surprise to all. Why, then, should one expect anything but failure when he neglects the great salvation? When he becomes neglectful of attending the house of the Lord, of studying His Word, of keeping his mind and heart absorbed with the things of the kingdom; when he neglects his Christian privileges and duties, why should he expect anything but failure in the love and enjoyment of God, both in this world and the world to come? Indifference is to-day the bane of the Church of God. All the infidelity and direct opposition to the cause of Christ amount to nothing as compared to the indifference in regard to it, both within and without the Church. The hardest community to reach is

the indifferent community. The most hopeless church is the church indifferent about the religion of Jesus. This ruinous indifference is that at which the Apostle is striking—those professing to be followers of Christ, and yet unconcerned about living as Christ directs. How shall such escape the condemnation of eternal woe?

But why does Paul call this a great salvation? Other salvations had preceded it that were confessedly great. Noah and his family were saved from a world deluged with God's outpoured wrath. This was a great salvation. The salvation of Israel from Egyptian bondage, through the cloud and through the sea, was wonderful and great. But in Paul's estimation, the salvation which "at first began to be spoken by the Lord," is pre-eminently great. It so far transcends all preceding salvations, that in comparison with them it is great. Consider a few reasons for this supreme greatness:

1. It is great because it is universal. It was provided for and offered to the race. It includes all the nations, kindreds, tongues, and tribes of earth in its gracious provisions. And it is for all time, as well as for all nations. It is not the salvation of a family or a nation, but of the world. It is great, therefore, because of its comprehensiveness.

2. It is great because it is a salvation of the soul from sin. When we consider the slavery of the soul to sin; of sin as a cruel tyrant that holds the world under his despotic power; the awful consequences of a world lying under the power of Satan, we see something of the greatness of this salvation. As we value an immortal soul, we have a criterion by which to value this salvation, in which are included the souls of the race that accept Christ.

Some years ago Oliver Wendell Holmes, I think it was, delivered an oration at the dedication of an institution in New York, for the saving of boys from a life of dissipation and crime, and the developing of them into men of business integrity. In the oration he in substance said, that if that magnificent institution, with its vast proportions and architectural splendor, with the unstinted devotion of men and money to carry it forward on its benevolent mission, only succeeded in saving *one boy*, it would be a paying investment; it would be time and money well spent. The next day a friend asked him if he did not think it a little extravagant to say that the saving of one boy would pay for all the expenditure of that institution? "*Not if that boy were mine*," was his terse and striking reply. This looks extravagant; but Jesus makes it much stronger. He says, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Let each mother value the worth of the soul of her child, then all such estimates of every soul of Man till the end of time, would enable us to see, if we could begin to comprehend it, something of the greatness of this great salvation.

3. This salvation is great in view of its cost. Remember how our Divine Lord left His home in heaven, the "glory that He had with the Father before the world was," and came to this low ground of sorrow; became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. While He spoke into being the world in which He lived, He had not where to lay His head. While He was King of kings and Lord of the universe, He became a despised Nazarene. While from the foundation of the world He had built mansions in the skies

for them that love Him, He had not a hut to shelter His devoted head from the pelting storm. This great salvation cost the Son of God the tears and sweat and blood of Gethsemane. Think of the agony that made one actually sweat great drops of blood! What a pressure of soul that forces the life-blood through the pores of the body! No wonder He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." What sorrow that caused angels to descend and to comfort and strengthen the soul of the Son of God! This, my dear friends, shows something of the cost of this great salvation.

4. Finally, this salvation is great in view of what it promises. It saves us from an eternity of banishment from God and the glory of His power. It saves us to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for us. It saves us to an eternity with God, in the company of the blessed Savior, with the grand heroes of faith that have shed their glory upon the world and left their lives embalmed in our hearts, with the loved ones with whom we have toiled in the service of the Master and shared the joys of His salvation here. The thought of such a home, of such a world, of such companionship, in the presence of God, fills the soul with rapture. How soon, dear Lord, shall we realize the great salvation, and know what it is to be there?



## SERMON VI.

## WALKING BY FAITH.

“We walk by faith, not by sight.”—2 *Cor.* v : 7.

IN this text the word “sight” is not used in the sense of philosophy or human wisdom, as it sometimes is, and as this is frequently interpreted. “Sight” here means the personal observation or experience beyond the dissolution of the body, in the presence of the Lord. While we are here in the body, absent from the Lord, we can not see and know the things pertaining to our future home as we shall see and experience them after we depart from the body to be ever with the Lord. Since we can not see these things with our eyes of flesh, we walk by faith while here in the body. God sees what we shall ere long see for ourselves, and gives us directions concerning them. By these we have to go; and this is walking by faith.

The Christian religion is presented to us under a variety of figures, and each represents a life of activity. The child of God is never represented as indolent or inactive. We speak of the “active members of the church.” These are generally few as compared to the whole number. But God knows nothing of any other kind. The “active members” constitute the whole thing with Him. And they ought to constitute the entire membership with us. Who ever can not be induced to be active in the service of God, should be cut off as a dead branch. The churches to-day

are loaded down with dead material. So much dead weight only hinders their progress. God cuts off every fruitless branch, because it encumbers the vine. And He directs us to do the same.

Faith has produced the grandest men and the grandest achievements the world has ever known. How could Noah build the ark by faith? Certainly not by sitting down and "exercising faith in God," whatever that may mean. On the contrary, it demanded all his exertions. It required years of incessant labor. How, then, was it built by faith? Simply by being built by divine direction. Whatever is done by divine direction is done by faith. Faith comes by hearing, and "saving faith" comes by hearing the word of God. Where God has spoken, men can have faith; where He has not spoken, they can not. The limits of God's revelation are the limits of our faith. When we get beyond the limits of divine revelation, we get beyond the sphere of faith and into the regions of speculation and philosophy. No man can do a thing by faith, in the Bible sense of the word, that God has not directed. While we are here in the body we walk by divine direction, hence by faith.

Faith is not a feeling nor an act, either upon the part of the creature or the Creator. It is a *principle of action*. It is a principle by which men of God have been governed in all ages. By it we live, fight the good fight of faith, war a good warfare, run the Christian race, and give our lives to the divine service. In our text we walk by faith. I want to call your attention to the beauty and simplicity of this figure. It will never cease to be interesting to see a little child learn to walk. With what caution it takes its first

steps! There is a time when we are all babes in Christ; and a time when we take our first steps by faith. Let us to-day try to follow the man who walks by faith, from his first step till he is safe at home in his Father's house, and walks, henceforth, by sight.

In order to get this "walk" clearly before us, and see it in all its simplicity, we must have before us three characters. First, the sinner who proposes to walk from earth to heaven by faith. Second, a modern orthodox clergyman, and third, a preacher of the ancient Gospel.

We invite your attention to the conversation between these three. And we are not unmindful of the fact that men are frequently misrepresented, whose words are prepared by another. Hence I shall be careful to give precisely what each one's understanding of the subject would cause him to say. If in any respect it is thought that one is misrepresented, let that fact be shown. I have a supreme contempt for a man who puts words into the mouth of an imaginary opponent, that he knows the man himself would not use. Should I be guilty of this, your condemnation can not be too severe.

I have never had a fondness for the dialogue style of writing; hence have never indulged in it, with this one exception. My reason is the realization of a fact happily expressed years ago by Dr. L. L. Pinkerton. He said that in a dialogue a man almost invariably selected *a fool* for an opponent. I have been deeply impressed with this fact. Hence I shall be the more careful to avoid it.

The three parties are together. They have met by request for special consultation. For the sake of

brevity we shall call them "Pilgrim," "Clergyman," and "Preacher."

*Pilgrim*: "Well, gentlemen, I have sent for you to have a plain talk in regard to that about which I am so much concerned—becoming a Christian and trying to get to heaven. While I want you to instruct and direct me, I want you to understand at the start, that your word alone will not satisfy me on any point; but I must have the direct word of God for every step I take. I propose to walk in the divine way, and I shall not take a step at any point on the road till I have the word of God for it. Only when I have the word of God to step upon, will I take a step at any time. Now, with this understanding, what is the first step that I should take?"

*Clergyman*: "Well, sir, I am glad you have determined to walk in the divine way; the way made sacred by the feet of Prophets, Apostles, and holy men of God. You ask for the first step. The first step, as I understand it, is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

*Pilgrim*: "Where is the word of God for that? Remember I am to have a thus saith the Lord for every step."

*Clergyman*: "When the Savior gave the commission to His Apostles, He said, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.' And when the Philippian jailer asked what he should do to be saved, Paul said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'"

*Pilgrim*: "That appears to be plain enough. It is

evidently one's duty to believe on Christ. What have you to say to that, Mr. Preacher?"

*Preacher:* "That is just as I understand it. We are justified by faith. And 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life.' It is our first duty to believe on Christ, and all else grows out of that and results from it. Without faith, says Paul, it is impossible to please God. Every step we take in the divine life is pleasing to God. Hence all must be taken by faith; and faith, therefore, must be at the beginning. This must be the first step, else all the rest could not be by it, and well pleasing to God because of it."

*Pilgrim:* "That is perfectly satisfactory to me. Now that my first step is to believe in Christ, or have faith in Him, how is that step taken? How am I to get this faith?"

*Clergyman:* "You are to pray for it. Faith is a gift of God. You should earnestly beseech God in prayer that He may give you saving faith."

*Pilgrim:* "Where does the word of God say that? You know I take no one's word in this matter but that of the Author of our salvation; you will please, therefore, to give me the chapter and verse for your statement."

*Clergyman:* "Well, I can't just give the exact language of Scripture for it, but that is what I gather from its general teaching. That is in harmony with our theology."

*Pilgrim:* "Your theology is nothing to me. What I want is the word of God. You not only fail to give me a statement of Holy Writ for your direction, but it

appears to me to be inconsistent. You say I must pray for faith. A prayer, in order to be of any value, must be in faith. One can not pray acceptably to God without faith in Christ. Then if I am to pray for faith my prayer must necessarily be without faith. And being without faith, it could not please God, and could not be of any value. The idea of praying for something that we must have before we can pray, is contradictory and absurd. Then you say that faith is a direct gift of God. If this be so, why should one be condemned on whom God has not bestowed the gift? Our daily bread is a gift of God, but not direct. It is the result of the use of means. So faith may be a gift in this way, just as salvation is, and a man may be responsible for not having it; but not so if the gift is direct and unconditioned. Mr. Preacher, will you please to tell me how I am to obtain faith in Christ?"

*Preacher:* "Paul says faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. In harmony with this, John says, near the conclusion of his testimony: 'Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name.' (John xx: 30, 31.) Again it is said, 'Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized.' These and other Scriptures show that faith in Christ is the result of giving heed to the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. The Holy Spirit, as Christ's advocate, has testified through His word to the divinity of Jesus, and our

faith in Him results from the acceptance of this testimony."

*Pilgrim*: "I can understand that. It looks consistent; and as it is clearly stated in the divine word, I accept it. I want to walk by faith; and I come to the word of God to get the faith by which I would walk. Being satisfied with that, what is now the next step?"

*Clergyman*: "You must also repent. While we are justified by faith only, the faith includes repentance. Indeed it is held by the orthodox generally, that repentance precedes faith. But, at any rate, repentance is a step to be taken."

*Pilgrim*: "But you have not given me the word of God, stating that I must repent; and remember that this is to be given for every statement."

*Clergyman*: "Well, since you are so particular, I will give you the word of God demanding it. When Christ gave the commission, He said, 'and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.' When those on Pentecost asked what they should do, Peter said, 'repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins.' In his celebrated speech on Mars' hill, Paul said: 'The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent.' And the Savior says: 'Unless ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.'"

*Pilgrim*: "That is perfectly clear. I see that repentance is a plain duty, and a condition of salvation. I can take that step on the word of God, and I am



therefore ready to take it. But now, how am I to take it? How am I to repent?"

*Clergyman:* "Repentance is a direct gift of God. Peter said that God raised up Christ 'to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins.' God, therefore, gives repentance unto life."

*Pilgrim:* "While God gave repentance to Israel, and gives it now, it does not follow that the gift is direct. Besides, this view involves a contradiction, to my mind, which must be harmonized before I can accept it. You have just shown that repentance is something we are commanded to do: 'Now God commands all men everywhere to repent.' How came all men to be commanded to *do* a direct gift? How can a gift be commanded? Mr. Preacher, what have you to say in regard to this?"

*Preacher:* "As you have just seen, men are commanded to repent. It is something, therefore, that they have to do. It is a condition of salvation, as you have also seen, for which they are responsible. 'God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' If it were a direct gift bestowed upon men, God himself, and not men, would be responsible for their not having it. Repentance is a change of mind or purpose in regard to the future. It never looks to the past, but always to the future. It is produced by things of the past, but never includes them. Paul says godly sorrow works repentance. It is produced, then, by godly sorrow. The sorrow is in regard to things of the past. The repentance is a change of purpose as to the future. He also tells us that the goodness of God leads us to repentance:

‘Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?’ (Rom. ii: 4.) The goodness of God is manifest especially in the gift and death of His Son. Hence the story of the cross, which is God’s power to salvation, leads men to repentance. In this they see their own sinfulness and God’s love, and these produce godly sorrow and repentance.”

*Pilgrim*: “I have no objection to offer to that. I see that repentance is a step to be taken by the pilgrim who walks by faith to the pearly gates, not a gift bestowed; and that the Gospel of Christ produces it. I am now prepared to take that step, seeing that I can take it upon the word of God. That point now being settled, what is the next step in the way of eternal life?”

*Clergyman*: “Well, I presume you should be baptized. True, it is not an essential. One can be saved as well without it as with it. But it is a command, and, to say the least, it is in good order for converts to be baptized.”

*Pilgrim*: “Is it true that baptism is a divine command, and yet a thing of such indifference? I can’t understand that. It does n’t seem to me to be consistent with the general nature and importance of positive divine commands. What is your understanding about it, Mr. Preacher?”

*Preacher*: “I understand that it is now your duty to be baptized. And since you demand the word of God for every thing, I will give you the word of God for it.”

*Pilgrim*: “That is just what I want. Proceed.”

*Preacher*: “When the Savior gave the commission,

as recorded in the last chapter of Matthew, He said, 'Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.' Here is a command that all the disciples should be baptized. And, as recorded by Mark, He said, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.' When those who believed, on the day of Pentecost, asked what they should do, Peter said, 'repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins.' When Philip preached in Samaria, they that believed were baptized, both men and women. When Peter went to the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius, as soon as they believed he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And in every case of conversion in the New Testament, the baptism of the converted is mentioned. Sometimes the mention of their faith is omitted, as in the case of those of Solomon's porch. Sometimes the repentance is omitted, as in the case of the Samaritans, the Corinthians, and the jailer. - And sometimes both, as in the case of Saul, Cornelius, and Lydia. But baptism is mentioned in every case, without exception. If faith and repentance are so essential, and baptism so unimportant, it is very strange that they should so often be omitted in the history of the New Testament conversions, while baptism is never omitted."

*Pilgrim*: "I am now satisfied, abundantly so, that it is my duty to be baptized; but how am I to do that? What act upon my part will exactly meet this divine requirement?"

*Clergyman*: "Well, there are different modes of baptism, and you can be baptized by any mode you prefer. You can be sprinkled, poured, or immersed. The mode is not essential. You can take your choice, but affusion is more convenient. I would advise you, therefore, to be baptized in that way."

*Pilgrim*: "Where does the Bible say that there are various modes of baptizing, and that one can take his choice? You remember the understanding: I am to have an express statement or example of the word of God for every thing. I am very much pleased with your statement, with its spirit of accommodation to the preferences of men, if it is only found in the word of God."

*Clergyman*: "Well, I don't know that the Bible anywhere states that exactly; but then the Greek word *baptidzo*, translated baptize, means to sprinkle or pour, as well as to immerse. Hence one is free to take either one of its meanings."

*Pilgrim*: "In what standard lexicons is the word thus defined? or where is it used in the Bible, or out of it, where it evidently means to sprinkle or pour?"

*Clergyman*: "I don't just now call any such to mind; but there is not a passage in the Bible that teaches immersion. John baptized in the Jordan, but that was only in the Jordan valley, and he baptized *with* water. This shows that the water was applied to the people, and not the people to the water. There is no immersion there. He baptized at Enon because there was much water; but the much water was for the culinary purposes of the great crowd, and not for baptizing. So there is no authority there for immersion. The three thousand could not have been immersed on the

day of Pentecost; hence no immersion in this case. The eunuch went down into the water, but Philip may have put water on his head with his hand. Hence there is no authority for immersion in this case. Paul says we are buried in baptism, but this is spiritual baptism. Consequently it affords no authority for immersion. We therefore go through the New Testament from side to side, and examine every passage in it, and find no authority for immersion in any one of them. Not one of them teaches it."

*Pilgrim*: "Mr. Clergyman, did you not tell me that immersion is a mode of baptism? Do you not immerse people, and call it baptism? Do you not say, 'in the name'—that is, by the authority—'of the Lord Jesus Christ I baptize you,' and immerse people?"

*Clergyman*: "Yes, I immerse people by the authority of Jesus Christ, for baptism. Every body does this. Our church requires it. If the candidate so desires, the preacher *shall* immerse him."

*Pilgrim*: "Well, sir, will you please to tell me where you get your authority? If you immerse people by the authority of Jesus Christ, you must think that He has authorized it. If He has authorized it, it must be in some place where He has said something about it. But you have mentioned every place in the Bible where He says anything about it, and denied authority for immersion in every case. Now, therefore, please tell me where you get your authority for immersion."

*Clergyman*: "I must confess, sir, that I had not thought of that before. The authority must be simply in the meaning of the word. It is universally conceded that the word means to immerse. Every lexicon in the world gives this, or its equivalent, as

the primary meaning of the word. Yes, we get our authority from the meaning of the word itself."

*Pilgrim*: "How can that be the meaning of the word unless the word means that in some of its uses? And you have denied that it is so used. Besides, if that is the meaning of the word, universally conceded, must it not mean that when used by Christ and the Apostles? But this you have just denied."

*Clergyman*: "Well, sir, I don't feel disposed to discuss the question with you; if you wish to be immersed, that is your privilege." What better answer could Clergyman make? If you think he could have done better, suppose you try it.

*Pilgrim*: "Mr. Preacher, you have been silent a long time; will you please to tell me how I am to be baptized according to the infallible word of God?"

*Preacher*: "Well, sir, as you are so very particular, I will try to give you just what the Divine Spirit has left on record to guide us in that matter. In addition to the universally conceded meaning of the word, as you have just heard from Clergyman, I will give you its uses in the New Testament. John baptized in the river Jordan. Jesus was baptized by him in the Jordan, and after His baptism He came up out of the water, as recorded by Mark. John baptized with water, showing that water is the element used. He baptized both with water and in water. The best translations say in water. He baptized at Ænon because there was much water there. The eunuch went down into the water, and after baptism he came up out of it. Paul says we were buried with Christ in baptism; that in baptism we were buried and rose again. Of course we rose out of that in which we were buried. No one

contends that we rose out of the Spirit when baptized; hence the Spirit is not that in which we were buried. Now, in every case where any thing is said at all on these several points, we find that people went out to where the water was, never having it brought to them. They were baptized in and with water, not in any other element, when man is the administrator. They were baptized in a river or other place where there was much water. Before baptism they went into the water. After baptism they came up out of the water. When baptized they were buried and rose again. It follows, therefore, that if you will go out to the water; go into it; be buried in it; rise out of it; come up out of it; and go on your way rejoicing, you will not take one step from the time you leave your room till you return to it, that others have not taken before you, guided by the Holy Spirit of God. Hence you can take every step in the entire process by faith, for each will be by divine direction."

*Pilgrim*: "That, sir, is abundantly satisfactory. There are no ifs and may-be-soes about it. I can do all that in the full assurance of faith. But now, after baptism, what is my next step?"

*Clergyman*: "Well, sir, I would advise you to join some church. True, it is not absolutely essential; many good men and women have died and gone home to heaven who never belonged to any church; but still it is better to belong to some branch of the church. It is a means of grace, and has much to do in helping one on in the divine life. You can join the church of your choice. Of course I should much prefer to have you join our branch of the church, but if you prefer some other, it is your privilege to go there."



*Pilgrim*: "Where does the Bible say that I may take my choice between a number of churches?"

*Clergyman*: "I do not know that it says that anywhere exactly, but then there are various denominations now, and it is one's duty to belong to some one of them, and the Bible does not say exactly which; hence each one has to exercise his own judgment as to a choice."

*Pilgrim*: "What denomination did Paul belong to?"

*Clergyman*: "Well, he didn't belong to any. There were no denominations in Paul's day. But it is different now."

*Pilgrim*: "What branch of the Church did Peter and the other Apostles belong to?"

*Clergyman*: "Well, they didn't belong to any branch of the Church. The Church had no branches then. They belonged to the Church itself. And the people now that belong to the different denominations, if they are Christians, also belong to the Church just as the Apostles did. The denominations are included in the Church."

*Pilgrim*: "Then they belong to the Church of God and to some denomination in addition. Is that it?"

*Clergyman*: "Yes; every body that belongs to the Church belongs also to some denomination."

*Pilgrim*: "Did the Apostles and first Christians belong to any thing in addition to the Church? You say they did not belong to any denomination; that there were no denominations at that time. It follows, therefore, that you advise me to do what they did not; to belong to something to which they did not belong. How can I take a step like that and take it by faith? How can I take a step by divine direction when there

is no divine direction, except to the contrary? Mr. Preacher, will you please to tell me what is my next step?"

*Preacher:* "We read that at the conclusion of the day of Pentecost 'the Lord added to the church daily those being saved.' We see that according to the commission and the instruction of Peter on that day, that they were saved by obeying the Gospel. In doing this they were added to the Church. Hence if you believe on Christ and are immersed, you will be saved from sin, and enter the Church of God or body of Christ. As the Apostles and first Christians stopped with this, not uniting themselves with any thing else, you should do likewise. This you can do by faith. Beyond this you can not go by faith, for beyond this there is no divine direction. And where divine direction stops faith must stop, for faith comes by hearing the word of God. We find that the early Christians, under the sanction of the Apostles, congregated into local churches, for the better edification of themselves in love, and for the conversion of those around them. Hence while all believers constituted the one Church of God, we read of the church at Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, and so on throughout the entire land. Hence after becoming a member of the body of Christ by obeying the Gospel, you should unite with some local church, be under its watch-care, and labor in it for the upbuilding of the kingdom of God."

*Pilgrim:* "I see the word of God for that in striking contrast with all that has been said about joining some denomination. My mind is clear upon that point. Now, then, what should I call myself? What name should I wear? I see that when one unites with a de-

nomination he wears the denominational name; but you have both shown that there were no denominations in New Testament times; that there is nothing said in the word of God about them, and hence I can not take the step by faith that would lead me into one. Since this is true, what name am I to answer to?"

*Clergyman:* "I can't tell you, sir. If you do not belong to any denomination you will be a kind of nondescript, it appears to me."

*Pilgrim:* "Did you not tell me that Paul did not belong to any denomination? Was he a nondescript?"

*Clergyman:* "Well, the case was different then. No one belonged to a denomination at that time."

*Pilgrim:* "But should we not all do now just as they did then, when guided by the Holy Spirit into all the truth? Mr. Preacher, what is your answer to the question?"

*Preacher:* "We read in the New Testament that the followers of Christ were called disciples, Christians, saints, children of God, brethren, etc., each name expressing some relation they sustained to the Master. And the Church to which they belonged was called the Church of God, Church of Christ, body of Christ, kingdom of God, etc. You should respond to any name applied to yourself or the Church that you find in the New Testament. The first Christians did this under divine direction. It was, therefore, right. What was right for them is right for you."

*Pilgrim:* "When I come into the Church how should I walk as a Christian? What steps have I then to take in regard to Christian conduct, in order to the assurance of a home in heaven?"

*Preacher:* "The Apostle Peter says you must add to your faith courage; to courage, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance; to temperance, patience; to patience, brotherly kindness; to brotherly kindness, love. He assures you that if you do this you shall never fall, but an abundant entrance will be granted unto you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior. You are to shun all the lusts of the flesh, a list of which is given, with all like things, and cultivate the fruits of the Spirit; to thus perfect yourself in holiness in the fear of God, and all will be well when the summons comes. You can pillow your head on the bosom of Jesus and breathe your life out sweetly there, in full assurance of faith. You can then say with Paul, 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not only to me, but also to all them that have loved his appearing.' "

## SERMON VII.

## THE LORD'S ADDITIONS.

“And the Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved.”—*Acts* ii: 47.

THESE are the closing words of the history of the day of Pentecost. We want to inquire how the Lord added these people to the Church. While the word church does not occur in the corrected text, it was constituted by this adding together of the saved. It is, therefore, understood, if not in the sacred text. Hence from the day of these first additions, we have the Church of the living God. Since this is abundantly proved in other sermons of this series, it will here be simply assumed. The answer to the question, How did the Lord add these people to the Church? must be found in the history of that day's transactions. Hence to this your attention is invited.

The expression, “and when the day of Pentecost was fully come,” is peculiar. The Greek word rendered “fully come” means, to fill full. And when designating time, it indicates that the time had been foretold, or indicated. The meaning here is that this particular Pentecost had been foretold, its events predicted, and that now the long predicted day had come, and its events were to transpire.

They, the Apostles, were all of one accord in one place. They were not there by accident. It is pertinent to inquire why they were all of one purpose in one place on that day? For this we find both an im-

mediate and a remote reason. They were all together in one place on that day because Jesus had so directed. When He gave them the commission, He said to them, "But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, till ye be clothed with power from on high." And on the day of the ascension, before He left them, "he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, ye heard from me; for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence." They were, therefore, all in one place awaiting the promise of the Father, because the Son had so directed.

But why did Christ thus direct them? Was this a mere fancy of His? There must have been some special reason why He so particularly charged them about continuing in the city till the events of Pentecost. We find these in the Jewish Scriptures. The Savior based His directions on requirements of the Old Testament. When He gave them the commission He said: "Thus it is written [in the Jewish Scriptures], that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. Ye are the witnesses of these things." He here makes them witnesses to see that these predictions concerning the Son of God were fulfilled. They were, therefore, to tarry in Jerusalem till these things were accomplished—to bring together *time*, *place*, and *events*.

Many yet remember the eccentricities of that remarkable man, Lorenzo Dow. He would often make appointments a year ahead; and on one of his tours

he made them seven years in the future. After preaching at a place, perhaps a leveled stump in the forest, he would say, "Seven years from this day, and at this hour, I will preach again from this stand." The people were amazed at such appointments. They would write them down on their cabin walls, giving the day and hour appointed. After a while it would cease to be talked about, but as the time began to draw nigh for the appointment, the interest would revive. Men would wonder if he would come to time. Finally they would hear of his coming on and filling his list of appointments. When the day arrived the whole country would be assembled, and punctual to the minute the man of God would make his way through the crowd, mount the platform, and preach the Gospel of Christ, as announced seven years before. The world wondered at such appointments, but they sink into insignificance when compared with this on the day of Pentecost. This was an appointment of over *seven hundred years* standing! It was by divine appointment. More than seven hundred years before God made the appointment, and when the time drew near, Christ arranged to have a man to fill it! During all these ages and generations, God had His eye on that day and that appointment. He was all the while working with a view to it, and preparing the world for it. Hence the appointment filled by the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost, under the direction of the Son of God, had been standing for him for over seven hundred years!

The preacher now being at his long-standing appointment, punctual as to time and place, his audience is assembled by manifestations of divine phenom-



ena which brought the multitude together. The work thus began, and it ended for that day by three thousand being saved and added to the Church by the Lord.

We inquire, next, into the process by which this was done. Certain things were done, certain agencies employed, and yet the Lord did it. It is important, therefore, to inquire as to how the Lord does such things.

The Savior had promised the Apostles ten days before that at this time they should be baptized in the Holy Spirit, and guided thereby into all the truth. He told them on the night of the betrayal, that as a result of this endowment from on high, they should speak as the Spirit gave them utterance; that the Spirit would convey to them the mind of Christ, and they should impart it to the people. When Peter spoke on the day of Pentecost, the truths which he uttered emanated from the mind of the coronated Christ, and were received and imparted to him by the Holy Spirit: "He shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he hears, that shall he speak; he shall take of mine and give it unto you." The truths thus imparted to Peter were impressed by his powers of speech on the minds and hearts of his hearers. They were convinced that Jesus, whom they had crucified fifty-two days before, in the same city, was the Christ, the long-promised Messiah of the Old Testament. They were convinced of this by their own Scriptures. Their faith came by hearing the word of God. The events in the life and death of Jesus, even to His resurrection, were foretold of the Christ. They could be true of none other. Hence He was the Christ. To the accomplishing of this end we have the Holy

Spirit, the Apostles, and the truth. And what we have on that occasion we have in every other case of conversion. Christ was the author of the truth uttered on that occasion, and the Holy Spirit and men the agents through which it reached the hearts of sinners. He is now the author of all the truth in the New Testament, and the Holy Spirit and men are the agents through which we have received it. And living men are still the agents to bring this truth to bear upon the hearts of others. These agencies were appointed at first by the Son of God (see John xvi.), and will so continue till the end of time. We see that what was done on this day through these agencies, the inspired historian says the Lord did. So we may safely conclude that whatever is thus done at any time is done by the Lord. It is sometimes contended that because it is said the Lord did a certain thing, these agencies were not used. For instance, the Lord opened Lydia's heart; and it is argued that He did it miraculously, without such agencies. If the Lord did such work through such agencies on the day of Pentecost, why conclude that He did it in some other way on another occasion, when there is no evidence to that end? When one way is clearly established, as we have it on this occasion, another which conflicts with it can not be assumed. If the Lord has two ways of changing the minds and hearts and lives of men, both must be distinctly proved. Hence those that advocate another must prove it.

Having noted the agencies employed, we next inquire as to the work accomplished. At the conclusion of Peter's sermon, he said: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made

Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." This was requiring faith in the strongest terms in which it is expressed in the Word of God. The Apostles, especially Paul, frequently use the word *know* in the highest sense of faith. This knowledge is predicated of things that we can know only by faith. To know a thing that we can know only by faith, is to express the highest degree of faith. We can know that Jesus is the Christ only by faith. Hence to know that, and to know it "assuredly," is to have the highest possible degree of faith. This Peter demanded of his hearers on that day. He had presented a course of reasoning that drove all honest, inquiring minds to that conclusion. Let us give a little attention to the main points of that sermon. We have only a synopsis of it. A sermon filling an appointment of over seven hundred years and resulting in three thousand conversions, ought to be worthy of the world's most serious consideration.

Remember that this was at the feast of Pentecost. At this time all the men of Israel were assembled. Hence "devout men from every nation under heaven" composed Peter's audience. Through these the good seed was scattered to the ends of the earth. Hence the divine wisdom in "beginning at Jerusalem" at this time.

When the multitude heard the Apostles speaking in all the dialects there assembled, some accused them of being drunk. That was strange. In this country a drunken man can't talk in his own tongue, let alone that of others of which he knows nothing. But Peter said they were not drunk, "seeing it is but the third hour of the day." This was doubtless a good argu-

ment then, else Peter would not have made it, but it would be a miserably poor one now. The idea that men are not drunk because it is only nine o'clock in the morning, would be laughed at now. But in that age and country men did not drink whisky that would make them crazy before breakfast. They drank wine that was slow in its effects. And there was some shame attached to drunkenness then. So that "they that are drunken are drunken in the night." They sought the cover of darkness to hide their shame. But now, when young men boast that they can wallow in the gutter to-day, and keep the company of the best young ladies in society to-morrow, the shame of drunkenness is mainly lost. Women suffer more from intemperance than men, and they deserve to. A young lady that keeps the company of dissipated young men, and marries a drunkard, deserves no pity for being a drunkard's wife.

Peter boldly assures them that God approved Jesus in their midst by signs and wonders and mighty works, and they *knew it*. Yet they did not accept Him, but put Him to a shameful death. He further assures them that the death of Jesus was not because they had gained the mastery over Him. On the contrary, it was a part of the divine programme. It was of God's own appointment. But with wicked hands they had done the deed. He then showed them from their own Scriptures that the Christ was to rise from the dead. It was not possible that death could hold Him. For David said: "thou wilt not leave my soul in hades, neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption." But did not David say this of himself? No. Because David was dead and buried. They all

knew his tomb. His soul had been left in hades and his flesh had seen corruption. But being a prophet, he spoke this concerning the Christ, that *His* soul was not left in hades nor did *His* flesh see corruption. These things could be true of none but the Christ. They were witnesses of the fact that they were true of Jesus. Hence He was the Christ. When they were thus convinced that Jesus whom they crucified was the Messiah, they were pierced to the heart, and cried out, what shall we do? Let us inquire into their condition at this time.

At the time of making this inquiry, they were in a saved condition, or they were not. If they were, they were saved without repentance. For they were afterwards told to repent. If they were not, then they were not saved by faith only, though they had faith expressed in the strongest terms in which it is ever expressed. In reply to the question, they were told to do two things—repent and be baptized. It is evident that they were not saved when they asked the question. Hence the two things directed—repentance and baptism—were in order to their salvation. Remission of sins is alike predicated of both. What one is for the other is for. It is admitted that repentance is in order to remission in a literal, unsymbolic sense. But the construction, according to the best scholarship of the world, regardless of denominational teaching, demands that remission be predicated of both in the same sense. Hence baptism is in order to remission in a literal, unsymbolic sense. It should be observed that they were to repent and be baptized, *in the name of Jesus Christ*, for the remission of sins. We should never lose sight of that fact. We too often see and

hear the passage quoted with that fact omitted. All is in the name of Jesus.

When Christ gave them the commission, He said, "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Here belief and baptism are connected, and salvation predicated of them, just as repentance and baptism are in the sermon of Peter, with the same salvation promised. We want to look at this in a way that all can understand and appreciate. I desire to deal exclusively in plain English.

In some of the old grammars we find this rule: "Co-ordinate connectives connect similar grammatical elements, and place them in equal grammatical ranks." Expressed more simply the fact is this: whenever two things are connected by the copulative *and*, and something is predicated of them, however much they may differ in other respects, they are perfectly equal as to the thing predicated. For example: God created the heavens and the earth. The heavens and the earth are very unlike in many respects. But they were both *created*. In that respect they are equal. Men and angels are immortal. Men and angels differ in many respects, but as to the thing predicated they are perfectly equal—they are both *immortal*. We have never known an exception to this rule, nor heard of one in any language. We do not believe that man can invent one. Outside of the Bible or in it, the rule holds with a relentless grip, till we come to the language of the Son of God in which He offers salvation to man; and here men would make an exception. Christ said, he that believes and is baptized shall be saved. However much faith and baptism may differ, Christ here connects them, and predicates salvation of them. They

can never expect God's grace  
until He commands

are, therefore, perfectly equal as respects the thing predicated. If this rule is to be set aside here, why? You can not find an exception to it in all the range of literature. You can not *make one*. I challenge you to do it. And yet, in the face of it all, you would set aside the language of the Son of God, and say it does not hold good in this case. See what your theory is driving you to. Be sure it is wrong. No right theory ever demanded the violation of such a principle as that.

Some years ago I knew a teacher of ability who prided himself on his knowledge of English. He was a Baptist, very strong in his convictions. One day I gave him that rule and asked him to find or frame an exception to it. When I next saw him, he said an exception was impossible; that in the very nature of things there could be no exception. I then quoted the commission. He saw the point in an instant, but attempted no reply. Within a month he was in the Reformation. He saw that his theory on that point could not stand the test, and the giving up of that led to the giving up of others, till he felt compelled to abandon his denominational position.

In this day's work we have the faith, the repentance and the baptism of the three thousand. To one feature in the day's proceedings, we invite special attention. They were all converted and got through in one day and were added to the church. How different from this are the "revivals" of modern times in the sectarian world. Now, in every "Pentecostal awakening," distressed, penitent sinners are left at the "altar of prayer," mourning over their sins, seeking salvation, but not able to find it. The God-dishonor-



ing spectacle of a whole church, with all their prayers and entreaties, failing to get God willing to pardon a penitent sinner, is now manifest as the very badge of orthodoxy, instead of the successful work of the day of Pentecost. A failure to get God willing to do what He has promised, ought to convince every right thinking man that the system is a fraud. On the day of Pentecost not a soul was left seeking salvation without finding. And this is true of every conversion in the apostolic age. Such a failure was unknown in that age. And being unknown then it would be unknown now if all would follow apostolic methods.

Not only was there no failure on that day, such as characterizes modern orthodoxy, but there was no "Christian experience" related before baptism. Three thousand people could not tell much of an experience in one day after nine o'clock, allowing time for the preaching and the baptizing. And yet they related all the experience required in that age—a simple confession of their faith in Christ. When people see that their practice is radically different from that in the age when men were guided into all the truth by the Holy Spirit, they should know they are wrong in that respect, and should abandon it. And when a theory leads to such a practice, they may know the theory is false. No apostolic theory ever led to unapostolic practice.

It has frequently been argued that the three thousand could not have been immersed on that day. For this they give two reasons. First a want of time, and second a want of water. As to a want of time, we see no reason why it should require more time to immerse than to sprinkle or pour them. And the people

who complain of a want of time to immerse, would require a whole season to get them all through at the mourner's bench according to their own practice. Why complain about a want of time to do that which God has directed, and be as silent as the grave about a want of time for their own practice, about which God has directed nothing? It has been demonstrated a thousand times that the twelve Apostles, to say nothing of the hundred and twenty, could have immersed them all at such rate as hundreds have been immersed at in this country.

As to a want of water, that is silly. To say nothing of the immense pools of the city, we call attention to one circumstance: When John was baptizing at Ænon, because there was much water there, the Pedobaptists tell us that the much water was not for baptizing, but for culinary purposes. Such a great multitude, they say, as went out to hear John, required much water to meet their domestic wants. But the whole Jewish nation of able men could assemble in Jerusalem three times a year and spend a whole week, and yet there be not water enough there to immerse people! Verily the legs of the lame are not equal.

It will be observed that all those baptized on that day received the word. The common version says they gladly received it. They received the way of life pointed out by the Apostle. They accepted the conditions of salvation presented. What a change took place in their own minds even before they were baptized! The sermon of Peter that convicted them of sin, pierced them to the heart and filled them with anguish. But when he answered their question, and told them what to do, and promised them salvation

as a result, they *gladly* received the word. Their anguish was turned into brightness and joy. While they realized that they were great sinners, but did not know the way of salvation, they were filled with alarm; but so soon as they knew the way of escape, their alarm was turned to joy. So now, when sinners are made to realize that they are lost, and the way of salvation is not made clear and tangible to them, they are filled with anguish. That is a natural consequence. But when the way of life is clearly presented and accepted, such agony is impossible. There may be just as deep conviction of sin, but, with a knowledge of the way of life, the anguish is impossible. On the contrary, gladness fills the soul. A man stands on the railroad track and sees the express coming with terrific speed. He is not alarmed. Why? Because he knows the way of escape. He has but to step aside and let the train pass in safety. But if he were bound to the track, and knew no way of escape, how different then would be his feelings! Many people think that because the Disciples do not ordinarily manifest so much anguish as some others, that they are not so deeply convicted of sin. But the difference lies not in this. The reason is, they know the way of life, and accept it with gladness.

Since those baptized on the day of Pentecost received the word, it follows that there were no infants. All were penitent believers, and accepted the way of life as presented. These were the first-fruits of the Christian dispensation; and to the close of the apostolic age we find no departure from this model.

From the day of Pentecost on, the Lord added to the Church those being saved. They were not saved,

and then added; nor added, and then saved. They were added and saved at one and the same time, and by one and the same process. They were added in being saved. Many seem to think that some after-process, such as extending the hand of fellowship, constituted this adding. But the New Testament knows nothing of such conditions of membership. This custom is a good thing to express our fellowship with those entering with us into the service, when not abused; but it is without divine sanction as a condition of church membership in any sense. When one is baptized, he enters into the Church, or Kingdom of God, by virtue of that consummating act. At the same time, and as a result of the same obedience, he is saved from his past sins. His connection with this or that local congregation, seems, in the New Testament, to be determined by his place of living. We have no hint of any one in that age living in one place and "holding his church membership" in another. Such things, now quite common, are without warrant in the word of God. As to the formal way in which disciples united with these local churches, nothing is said. This belongs to that chapter of expedient things regulated by decency and good order.

The fact that the Lord added the saved to the Church suggests a few questions:

1. *How may we know that the Lord adds us?*

In this age there are a great many people added to a great many churches by a great many agencies and in a great many ways. Is all or any of it done by the Lord? Unless one is added by the Lord, his being added will be of no value. How, then, may we know that one is added by the Lord? I know of but

one way to answer that question. We see how the Lord added those at the beginning. We have no intimation that He ever changed His plan. On the contrary, these were the first-fruits of His divine system, perfected for all time. Hence He adds people to-day just as He added them then. Consequently, if we are added as they were on the day of Pentecost, we may rest assured that the Lord does it. If we are added in some other way, we have no such assurance. We have seen the agencies employed on that day—the Holy Spirit, human agency, and the truth. When we are now influenced by the truth as the Spirit of God has revealed it, and the agency of men in bringing it to bear on our hearts, and are thus led to abandon the world and stand with God's people, we may know that the work is of the Lord. When we are convicted of sin by the Spirit of God through the truth, and believe on Christ as our Savior, and repent of our sins and are buried with Christ in baptism, as those did and were on the day of Pentecost, we may know that the Lord does it. That is the way He did it then, and that is the way He does it now. Hence, if we would know that the Lord adds us to His redeemed family, we must come to Him in that way. Other ways will do for speculation, doubt, and uncertainty; but if we would rest upon the perfect assurance of God's word, we must comply with its holy requirements. We know that just as God led others from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son in New Testament times, He would lead us. We have, therefore, only to place our hand in His and walk in their footsteps. This we can do, and with this we have the divine assurance.

2. *How may we know that the Church to which we are now added is the Church to which the Lord added the converts on the day of Pentecost—the Church of Christ?*

In this age people are added to a great many churches. All will admit that the Church to which the Lord added those on Pentecost is that to which all should be added now. On this there is no controversy. To be added to this Church is to be where the Lord wants us. To be added to something else, though it be called a church, may be of no value. It is important, therefore, to determine, if we can, whether the Church to which we are added is that to which the Lord added the first converts. We know of but one way to determine that important question. This Church is clearly defined in the New Testament. Its name, its worship, its organization, its government, its conditions of membership, etc., that constitute it a distinct institution, are clearly revealed in the New Testament. These are discussed and developed in other sermons in this series; hence we shall here but allude to them. If the institution to which we are added, called a church, corresponds in these essential features to the Church described in the word of God, whose first converts the Lord thus added, we may be assured that we are added to the same. But if the church to which we have been added has some other name or conditions of membership, or organization, or government, etc., we may know that it is not the divine institution to which the Lord added those first obedient to the Gospel. The importance of belonging to the right Church can not be overestimated; for there are churches of men as well as a Church of God. The Church of God is that which is the body of Christ,

with Christ its ever-living Head. This is the Church that Christ loved, and for which He gave Himself; which He washed with water by the word; which is His bride, to be presented pure and faultless before God. In this is the blood of atonement, the forgiveness of sins, and the habitation of God through the Spirit. The churches of men, however grand and alluring, however much they may embody the wisdom of men and the glory of the world, contain not these divine and glorious things. Let us, then, as we appreciate heaven and a glorious, eternal dwelling with God, seek the Church thus clearly defined in His word, and in it give to Him the strength of our manhood and the service of our lives. To God be glory, *through the Church*, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end.

3. *How may we know that we were saved in being added to the Church?*

This is also an important question. Being added to a church will be of no worth unless, in being added, we are saved from sin. Simply belonging to a church saves no one. Christ saves us: and He saves us, first, on entering His Church; and, second, by a faithful service of Him in it. At the beginning of the church life we are saved from sin; at the end of it we are saved in glory. Without salvation from past sins the church life is worthless. Hence the importance of knowing that we are saved from sin in being added to the Church. Like the other two questions, I know of no way to determine this point except by the divine example we have before us. We see how the converts on the day of Pentecost were added. We see the agencies employed, and that which they be-



lied and did. As a result of this, they were saved. When, through the same agencies, we believe and do the same things, we have the divine assurance that we also, like them, are saved. These are simple and easy. There need be no mistake, nor no failure. We have the same agencies, and when we believe in Christ, repent and are immersed, as they did and were, the same Lord that saved them will save us for the same reasons. Consequently we may know, by simply adhering to the divine record, that the Lord has added us; that He has added us to His Church, His own divine body; and that in being added we were saved from our sins. With this knowledge we are prepared to serve Him, in full assurance of faith. We are prepared to consecrate our lives to Him, adding the Christian graces, partaking more and more of the divine nature, till the conflict is over and we rest with God.

There are two distinct objects in view in entering the church life: one is the seeking of salvation; the other, to glorify God and do good to men. The first prepares us for the second; and the second is essential to the success of the first. Too many people come into the Church with the single, selfish purpose of trying to get to heaven. And their main reason for wanting to get to heaven is to keep from going to hell. The man that enters the Church with this idea has a very low conception of the Christian life. Getting to heaven is a thing about which a godly man feels very little concern. He is concerned about doing his duty, about doing good to others, about saving others from sin, about honoring and glorifying God; and getting to heaven comes as a consequence. That will take care of itself. The faithful child of God feels no unea-

siness about it, and, hence, is not concerned about it. We ought to come into the kingdom and service of God early in life, to give our life to Him, to upbuild His kingdom and glorify His name. We should be sure that we are in His Church—in by His divine leading—and saved from our sins. We are thus prepared, amid the toils and cares of life, to rest in peace and divine security, knowing that our life is hid with Christ in God, and that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory.

## SERMON VIII.

## OUR STRENGTH AND OUR WEAKNESS.

Delivered before the State Missionary Convention, Moberly, Mo., Sept. 2, 1880.

“Out of weakness were made strong.”—Heb. xi: 34.

THE religion of God has ever been a religion of faith. The faith of the Bible is a principle of action which governs the lives of men and brings them into submission to the divine will. A life of faith, therefore, is a life of growth. By faith men are out of weakness made strong. But this strength is not the work of a day. It is the result of a life. We are all babes before we are men.

In recording the many wonderful things which the ancients accomplished by faith, it is affirmed that out of weakness they were made strong. In noting the extreme weakness of some of the prominent characters of that age in the early stages of their life of faith, and the grand heroes which they finally became, we find much to encourage us in our struggles toward a higher life and a closer walk with God. We are thankful that God has given these examples for our imitation. Among these Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are prominent representatives. Abraham and Isaac were both so weak, even after they had been in close communion with God, and had assurances of His protection, that they relied on human strategy rather than divine providence. They both prevaricated in regard to their wives. They made a delib-

erate effort to deceive. They seemed to think that their wives were too handsome to claim. The complaint is not now so common. Jacob supplanted his brother by deceiving his father, old and blind; and by a shrewd device managed to get most of the flock of his father-in-law. Yet out of such weakness these men developed by faith into moral and spiritual giants, whose names stand out on the sacred page worthy of our profound reverence and sublime admiration. But this was the development of a long life. It is a grand mistake to suppose that Abraham was capable of doing, when called out of Ur of the Chaldees, what he afterwards did at the command of God.

Also in the lives of the Apostles we see the same development out of weakness into strength. Not only did they all forsake their Master; but Peter, the boldest of the lot, even cursed and swore, and denied that he ever knew Him. But when possessed of a purer faith, they were all ready to go to the stake, and thanked God that they were worthy to suffer for Him whom they once deserted and denied.

In studying the elements of weakness and strength of God's ancient people, we pass by an easy transition to the study of those elements in His people now. Hence it is my purpose to-day to consider the elements of strength and weakness as we understand them to exist among us as a religious people. This leads me to speak of what is generally denominated

#### OUR PLEA.

Whenever a people come before the world demanding its recognition, the world has a right to demand of them a reason for their claim. Hence we should

be always ready to give a reason for the position we occupy in the religious world. The work in which we are engaged is generally called the Reformation, but sometimes, and more correctly, I think, the Restoration. But this depends largely on the point of view from which the work is considered. In presenting this plea to-day I shall speak first of its

#### ELEMENTS OF STRENGTH.

In considering the nature of our work as a people, I shall first mention what it is not, that we may the more clearly understand what it is. In doing this I shall be very brief, because most of you are as familiar with these facts, or more so, than I. But the mention of them is necessary to get other thoughts properly before us.

The work of Thomas and Alexander Campbell, if I understand it, was not to establish another church or denomination. On the contrary, they held that there were too many churches already; and that for these there is no divine warrant. They held that denominational divisions are evil, and, therefore, should not exist. Hence to start another denomination, in the current sense of that term, would be to increase an existing evil. They never regarded their work in this sense during their lives. Nor are we or others justifiable in so regarding it now.

It was not the purpose of the Campbells and their co-laborers to reform the denominations as such. While there was great room for reformation in all the denominations, and is yet, still a reformation, however great, that would leave them *denominations*, would leave them in a position unsanctioned by the New Testament. A

very great reformation has been gradually produced in the denominations, which we are satisfied is largely due to our plea and work as a people, but this is only an incidental result, and not the main object sought.

The primary object of the religious work in whose interests we are here assembled, was—

I. *To restore the Church to the world as it was when left by the Apostles.*

It must be admitted by all who respect divine example, that God cast the New Testament churches in just such a mold as He saw was best. In this respect, therefore, they were left by inspiration just as God would have them. They were left as models for our imitation. We are to copy what is approved, and avoid what is condemned. From this divine standard the Church gradually departed, till the apostasy was the result.

To restore the Church to the original model, is a work that must commend itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God, who once firmly grasps the idea. On this underlying principle rests the very pillars of the temple of faith we are trying to build. Here is the basis of our strength. The strength of God's people has ever been in their faith. Hence, if we would build strong, we must build by faith. Faith comes by the word of God. Hence, if we would build by faith, we must build by that word. What is done by faith is done by divine direction. Therefore, if we would become strong in our work, we must work by divine direction.

Men admit that our plea for restoration is a grand conception of Christian work, but say it is ideal, and can never be accomplished. Our faith is that it can

be accomplished. Much has already been done, and God's word indicates that much more should and can be done. If it is never done, it will not be the fault of the plea, but of those who make it. Are the rewards of present success required to induce truth-loving men to do what God has appointed? That is the work of time-servers, and not of men who love the truth because it *is the truth*.

(1.) This work of reformation demands that we accept Christ as our only creed, and the Bible as our only rule of faith and practice.

We sometimes say that the Bible is our creed. But this is to speak loosely; not accurately. Under the ministry of the Apostles the converts were not asked if they believed the Bible, nor the New Testament; for it was not then written. But they were required to believe in Christ. They were not asked to accept some theory about Christ, but were required to accept *Him*, as their personal and only Savior. Accepting Him the Bible is accepted as a consequence, because He is the central thought of the Book. Take Christ out of the Bible, and you take its life out. The Bible becomes our rule of faith and practice because it is an amplification of our creed—a divine commentary on its wonderful meaning—*Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God*. Whether or not we would have another creed, is not a matter of choice with us. We are compelled to have this, and this only, or abandon our plea. For this only did the churches have whose imitation our plea demands.

(2.) Our work demands that we hold to the simplicity of conversion, and admission into the Church by baptism, just as we find them in the New Testament.



The simple presentation of the Gospel facts to be believed, commands to be obeyed, and promises to be enjoyed, disentangled from the sectarian confusion on the subject of conversion, has ever been a tower of strength to the cause we plead. Our plea compels us to stick close to Bible *facts* on all these points, without regard to theories. Without a reproduction of these historic facts, our work of restoration would not be a restoration of New Testament Christianity.

(3.) Our work demands that we call Bible things by Bible names.

We must first have the Bible *things*. We can not have a complete restoration without them. Then when we have the things which the New Testament churches had, we must give them the names that the Holy Spirit gave them. To disregard the things they had, or the names given them, is to presume to improve on divine wisdom. A departure from this principle could never result in a restoration of the Church of God as it was when these things existed. Of course I speak of things of divine appointment and approval, and not of mere incidentals.

As a natural result of the restoration of New Testament Christianity, and resting on that divine foundation, is—

2. *Our plea for Christian union.*

The union of all God's people in one harmonious body, as they were in the apostolic age, is a thing for which every one who loves the Lord should both work and pray. The necessity of this in order to the world's conversion, it is not my purpose to discuss. It is sufficient to say that its evident importance and right-

eousness have so struck the popular mind that it is one of our greatest elements of strength.

(1.) Our plea for Christian union implies that there are Christians to unite.

It has ever been admitted that God has children among the denominations—those who have obeyed the Gospel and are serving Him in the spirit of humility. To deny that there are Christians apart from those who stand identified with us in our work of restoration, would be to make our plea for Christian union both meaningless and senseless. While we believe that many identified with the denominations are Christians, they have taken on much that is neither Christianity nor any part of it; and this we labor to have them put away. These are the things that cause sectarian divisions, with all their evils. Such people are more than Christians; and what they have in addition is wrong. In being more than Christians they become less than what Christians should be. This may appear paradoxical, but it is true.

It will be seen, therefore, that while we claim to be Christians only, we do not claim to be the only Christians. Our principles will not allow us to be any thing else; and we strive to have others satisfied with being the same. Hence the charge so often made, that we arrogate to ourselves alone the name Christian, is false. We simply decline to be more than this, because God's people in New Testament times were nothing more. To those who love the simplicity of apostolic Christianity this position will commend itself with great force.

(2.) Our plea for the union of God's people implies that the Church of God includes more than those engaged

in this work of restoration. In other words, that the Church of God is a more comprehensive term than those descriptive of our work.

God's Church is composed of individual Christians, wherever they may be. Of His Church they become members by obedience to the Gospel. They do not forfeit their membership in God's Church till they cease to be His children. As long as they are children of God they are members of the body of Christ. Hence if there are children of God outside of what the world calls Campbellism, the Church of God extends beyond the same boundary. Consequently, while we claim to belong to the Church of God only, we do not claim to be the only people who belong to the Church of God. Others who belong to the Church of God also belong to a church *not* of God. They belong to *two* churches, while we belong to but one. Hence the whole charge of exclusiveness brought against us on this point turns on the question as to whether or not it is one's privilege to belong to but *one* church, and that the Church of God? That God's people in ancient times belonged to but one Church is simply an admitted fact; and His people now should belong to that, and that only, to which they belonged then.

In the New Testament the word *church* is applied to a local congregation, and to the whole body of believers. It is never used in any denominational sense. Consequently we may not limit it to any religious people now, unless we believe that they include all God's children. While, therefore, we belong to the Church of God only, and our principles will not allow us to belong to any other, we should be careful to give

to that term no mere denominational meaning. When I say I belong to the Church of God, the Church of Christ, or any other scriptural term by which the same thing is designated, I mean that I belong to God's redeemed family,

"Part of whom have crossed the flood,  
And part are crossing now."

(3.) From this it follows that our work of restoration is wholly undenominational.

When the Church of Christ shall be restored as it was at the beginning, or to the extent of that restoration, it will be wholly undenominational. This is true from the simple fact that there were no denominations then. No one then belonged to the Church of God and also to some denomination. All the Apostles belonged to the Church of God. None of them belonged to any denomination. So of all the disciples. What was true then may be true now; and to the extent that this is true, or ever shall be, in the restoration of the Church, to that extent will denominationalism cease. Our plea means its destruction. It can mean nothing less. This is the secret of their intense hatred of it. But be it so; truth can never compromise with error.

The great objection which the world has urged against our plea for Christian union is, that we can not all think alike. In this they have their mind more on opinion than faith. Hence we have found it necessary to urge a union on faith, and not on opinion. One important item of our plea has, therefore, become

3. *Unity of faith and diversity of opinion.*

Many have thought the distinction between faith

and opinion more fanciful than real. We think, however, that between the two there is a clearly-marked line in the word of God. One is a matter of divine statement, the other of human inference. Or rather, one is that which divine testimony establishes without doubt; the other that which is probable, but on which the testimony is not conclusive. The strength of one's opinion is governed by the strength of testimony. We have this strikingly illustrated in Abraham at the offering of Isaac. The test of his faith was not simply in taking the life of his son, but in taking the life of him whose posterity God had said should be as numerous as the sands on the sea-shore. The question with Abraham was, If I obey God's command, how can He fulfill His promise? His faith was that God would do what He had promised. His opinion was that He would do it by raising Isaac from the dead. (See Heb. xi: 19.) This was the conclusion of his reasoning; not of God's statement. In his faith he was right. In his opinion he was wrong. God did it, but did it not as Abraham expected. Abraham's opinion, though wrong, interfered not with his obedience. This has ever been the real test of the hurtfulness or innocence of one's opinion. So long as it does not stand in the way of one's obedience to God, it will not interfere with his salvation. And while it does not interfere with one's salvation, he should be permitted to enjoy it. But he should not be permitted to disturb the peace of Zion by urging it on others as an item of faith. When one's opinion, however, stands in the way of his obedience to God, it becomes fatal. Hence, after all, obedience becomes the test of acceptance and fellowship.

(1.) From the distinction between faith and opinion it follows that nothing should be claimed as an item of faith that is not clearly expressed by precept, example or *necessary* inference.

What God has clearly expressed as His will, men should be required to accept and do. This, faith in Christ demands. Without this there can be no unity of faith. Further than this we can not go without requiring unity of opinion; and that the Bible does not authorize.

(2.) From this it follows that we may make nothing a test of fellowship that Christ has not made a condition of salvation.

If we recognize those in the fellowship of the Church of God who do not comply with the clearly-expressed conditions of salvation, we break down all barriers between the Church and the world. If we refuse to fellowship obedient believers on account of something which Christ has not made a condition of salvation, we arrogate to ourselves the prerogative of binding on earth what has not been bound in heaven. Hence the whole question of fellowship turns on the conditions of salvation.

(3.) While our plea demands conformity to the precepts and examples of God's word, we should carefully mark the distinction between the essentials and the incidentals of that age of the Church which we have accepted as an example for our imitation.

When we fail to insist on that which was an essential item in New Testament faith or practice, we fail to that extent in our work of restoration. When we insist on the mere incidentals of that age, which did or did not exist, according to circumstances, we contend

for a religion shaped by accident, rather than by divine principles.

The observance of the foregoing principles has constituted, I think, our main elements of strength as a religious people.

#### ELEMENTS OF WEAKNESS.

While it is important to know our strength, it is equally important to understand our weakness. That we have elements of weakness is a painful fact. These we should study to understand, and labor to correct. Our judgment is, that prominent among the things now constituting our weakness is—

1. *The extent to which we are losing sight of our distinctive plea.*

Unless we have a distinctive plea we have no right to exist. The day we become like the denominations around us, that day ends our right to exist as a distinct religious people. If we have a distinctive plea, in that consists our strength. I believe that our distinctive principles are made less prominent in our pulpits now than formerly. I do not mean that our preachers should be always on what is called "first principles." Very far from it. But I do mean that all our members should be deeply indoctrinated in the things that distinguish us from other religious peoples. The people should understand *why* they occupy the position they do. The better this is understood the more it will be appreciated, and the more firm and consistent will be the Christian life. When people are led to believe that sectarianism is about as good as New Testament Christianity, their influence for the cause we plead is positively hurtful. When-



ever we begin to curry favor with the sects and fawn upon them for recognition, we are certain to say but little about a plea that lays the ax at the root of the whole denominational tree. Whenever we begin to curry favor with the world, we are certain to fall in with the world's notions, and adjust ourselves to the world's ways. Hence much of that in which churches now indulge in the way of worldly amusements, carnal methods of raising money, the spirit of mere entertainment in the worship, etc., is due to the fact that they copy the sects, rather than the New Testament churches; and are filled with the spirit of the world, instead of the spirit of Christ.

The religion of Christ is a religion of spirituality. When you take the spirituality out of a church, you take the life out of it. You may have members and wealth and culture left, but the power of divine truth and love is gone. There is too much of this spirit pervading our churches. Worldly conformity in spirit, in worship, in life, is the great weakness from which our cause is suffering; and this is largely due, in my judgment, to the want of strict adherence to the fundamental plea that gave us our power in the past. If the restoration of New Testament Christianity, *in spirit and in life*, as well as in form, had full possession of our hearts, this would never be.

(1.) One thing, I think, in which we have copied largely from the world, and which adds greatly to our weakness, is our practice in church government.

In large measure we borrowed from the Baptists the democratic idea of church government. We learned to decide too many things by a majority of the popular vote. We act as if the kingdom of God were a de-

mocracy, and not an absolute monarchy. This has given rise to immense trouble. It has left questions to be settled by boys and girls who hardly know whether the Acts of the Apostles is in the Old Testament or the New, that were decided by Jesus Christ more than eighteen hundred years ago.

Much is said in this age about an inefficient eldership, and said with much truth. This is a natural and necessary consequence of this false idea of church government. Any man will become inefficient anywhere when he is made a mere figure-head. When the bishops are recognized as the "*overseers*" of the congregation, who are to govern the church in harmony with divine law so long as they are kept in that place, they will have inducement to make themselves efficient. And only those thus capacitated should be put into the position. The New Testament example is to have none, till you have men qualified for the work. And it is always safest and best to follow the Book. Democracy may be well enough in human governments, but it is unknown in the kingdom of God. When the young and giddy ignore the eldership, and take the reins in their own hands, instead of honoring them as their spiritual counselors and rulers, the restoration at this point breaks down. We are exceedingly weak here, and the symptoms are not favorable for improvement.

(2.) From democratic ideas of church government have arisen extreme and injurious views of congregational independence.

In breaking away from the ecclesiastical slavery of the past, my judgment is, that we have run to the opposite extreme, and become too free. Freedom is

a good thing when properly used, but when it runs into licentiousness it is worse than bondage. While the churches of Christ are under no ecclesiasticism, in the current sense of that term, they sustain a close relation to one another in the "general assembly and Church of the first-born." This relation can not be disregarded without disintegration and mischief. My candid judgment is, that this has been done, and continues to be done, to the serious weakening of the bonds that should unite as one loving household of faith all who are striving for the same grand work of restoration. Each church ought to feel itself in sympathy with every other, as sisters in the great family of God, and so act as to respect the interests, the rights, and the feelings of all the others. . The spirit of congregational independence that disregards this fraternal unity, is not of Christ.

Another thing which may be justly regarded as a great weakness in our cause is—

2. *A want of co-operation in church work.*

In union there is strength. In co-operation there is power. We have not worked together as we should for the accomplishment of so grand an end. As individuals and churches we have acted too much on the principle of every one for himself. We must learn to work as one body if we would ever accomplish what we should toward the world's conversion. We think this co-operation has been hindered in several ways.

(1.) Much of the indifference and opposition to co-operation has been produced doubtless by imprudence in the work.

In our mission work we have not always been just as careful as we should have been to infringe upon no

New Testament legislation, and thereby create no fears or opposition. Our privileges and duties in these matters lie within certain limits, and the more careful we are to regard these limits the more unity and harmony will there be in the work. Should we differ as to the amount of liberty which the New Testament grants, it is not wise to disregard the judgment of a large and influential element of the brotherhood, and thereby provoke their opposition. Union in poorer methods is infinitely preferable to division in better ones. We plead for the union of all Christians by showing the power and divine wisdom there is in it. We censure the sects for doing that which creates unnecessary division in Christian work. In our mission work it would be well for some of us to take a dose of our own prescription. A disposition now growing to make missionary conventions, and their executive boards, high courts ecclesiastic to decide upon and officially settle controverted questions in the brotherhood, touching missionary matters, will eventually, if persisted in, drive from such societies every prudent man, in disgust.

(2.) A still greater amount of this indifference is due to a false education with reference to the support of the Gospel.

The warfare that was justly made by Alexander Campbell on the "hired clergy" was largely misconstrued, and produced a general feeling of opposition to the support of preachers of the Gospel. We are very easily educated in the direction of our selfishness. From this false education the churches have never recovered. Many of them have vastly improved, but we are still suffering from the effects of that wrong idea at

the start. In addition to this, the false idea of congregational independence has caused many churches to adopt as scriptural the motto that "charity begins at home." They have been slow to learn that while a church has its own local work to perform, for which it is congregationally responsible, it is only a small part of the great body whose interests are its interests, and to which it should constantly look, and for which persistently work. The church that never looks beyond its own local interests has a low and selfish conception of Christianity. When congregations become independent in their feelings and actions with reference to the welfare of others, they will soon become independent of their Master.

It is a very easy matter, therefore, for us to slight any co-operative work when we have no heart in the thing to be accomplished. We are naturally hard to please about ways and means when we are indifferent about the end. If we had the spirit of our Master we would be striving to save the world; and if we doubted the wisdom of the plan open to us for its accomplishment we would risk its want of wisdom till we could do better. The fact is, if we all had more of the spirit of Christ in our hearts we would have more regard for and confidence in one another.

Our last and greatest weakness that I shall mention is—

3. *A want of personal consecration to the work.*

No man or body of men ever succeeded grandly in any cause who did not throw into it their concentrated energies. If our affections are divided between the Church and the world, we shall accomplish but little. "This one thing I do," is the secret of success. A consecrated life is a life of power.

(1.) A want of consecration is now being manifest largely on the part of preachers.

While I believe the world contains no truer and nobler men than those now engaged in pleading for the restoration of New Testament Christianity, I do not believe that the cause of Christ is absorbing our attention as it should. Many of us now seem wholly indisposed to practice that self-denial that characterized our fathers in this good work. Too many of us are hunting an easy place. We want every thing lovely. One humble, self-denying, earnest preacher of the Gospel, of mediocre ability, with the spirit of John T. Johnson, is worth a ten-acre field full of clerical babies, that whine to be dandled on the luxurious lap of the Church and fed on dainties. Our Master never had an easy place, nor should we expect to find one till we find it in the grave.

Again, there are too many of us beginning to look to secular pursuits. Circumstances may demand this in many cases, but we should be careful that it is first demanded. The man who spends the week in peddling sewing-machines or patent churns, will come before his neglected and hungry congregation on the Lord's day with a dish of hash. People soon tire of theological hash. Like eating-house hash, it is difficult for them to see what it's made of. But, unlike cheap hotel hash, they generally find nothing in it. Consequently the preacher that feasts on the world all the week, and gives his congregation the scraps on Sunday, soon ceases to be in demand; and then he complains of the church. Brethren, let us be sure that a consecrated life is unappreciated by the Church before we turn to the world for our daily bread.

(2.) Church officers and private members are too much disposed to look after their own private interests, and to neglect the interests of the church.

Could we all get out of this selfishness, and be consecrated to the Lord's work, our colleges, orphan schools, missionary enterprises, religious publications, and all other good works of the Church of God, would receive our sympathy and support. We would feel that they are all a part of *our* work because they are a part of the *Lord's* work; hence we would never cast them aside as none of our business simply because we are not *paid* to look after them. This want of individual interest in all the work of God which demands a heavy outlay in time and money to enlist our attention and aid, is a paralyzing weakness to the whole body. We should seek to remedy it as soon as possible, by imbibing and cultivating the spirit of our Master, and expanding our hearts with more of His pure and undefiled religion.



## SERMON IX.

## THE DIVINE DRAWING.

“No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him : and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me.”—*John* vi : 44, 45.

THIS is the language of the Son of God. It implies that He and sinners are separated. The distance between them is not measurable in feet and yards, but in degrees of moral and spiritual turpitude. In this respect the distance is immense.

## THE SEPARATION.

The cause of the separation is sin. For this man alone is responsible. Time was when this separation did not exist. Then man stood in the immediate presence of God, and enjoyed His companionship without a shadow of defilement between them. Then man was innocent; for God had made him thus, and he had not sinned. In this state of sinless purity he was accounted fit society for his divine Creator. Nor did God sever those social ties till man defiled himself with sin. God never turned man from His presence in a state of innocence. The principles of the divine government required man's companionship while innocent and pure; his expulsion when defiled by sin. This is required by the all-pervading law of congeniality. It lies at the foundation of all the happiness of heaven and earth. Because of this the Savior said: “Blessed are the

pure in heart, for they shall see God." "See" is here used in the sense of enjoy. Only the pure in heart shall enjoy the companionship of God, for they only are like Him. The corrupt can not enjoy the society of the pure. There is no congeniality between them. Were the wicked taken into the presence of God unchanged in heart, and uncleansed by the blood of Jesus, heaven would be to them a hell. Standing in the presence of the glorified Son of God who gave Himself for them, beholding the marks of the death which He died to redeem them, impressed with the awful price of their redemption, and with the fact that they never honored Him in this world; that they never bowed to His authority; that in their rebellious hearts they said we will not have this man to rule over us, and knowing that their souls are yet polluted by sin which He shed His blood to cleanse, it is only natural that they should call upon the rocks and mountains to fall upon them and hide them from the face of the Lamb of God. They would call upon hell itself to open wide its everlasting gates and take them in where they would be eternally shut out from the face of the Lamb and the purity that surrounds His throne. This principle shows the absurdity of Universalism. It is contrary to every law in the moral government of the universe. But this is more fully treated in another sermon.

No sooner had the pair sinned, and their eyes opened to "know good and evil," than they felt the crushing force of this principle. At the sound of the foot-fall of God as He "walked in the garden in the cool of the day," they betook themselves to its secluded bowers. They fled from His presence, as

if they could hide from His eyes the sin that had been revealed in their own. That presence which hitherto was the consummation of the bliss of Eden, was no longer tolerable. With their sense of guilt, earth had no dismal spot not preferable to the garden of delight, with God in it.

Man, then, is responsible for this separation. It is the consequence of his own act. He rendered himself unfit for the society of God, and incapable of its enjoyments. Hence the separation.

#### THE RETURN.

Before Christ and the sinner can come together, they must become alike. That which caused the separation was that they became unlike. Hence the reason why Christ and sinners are separated is that they are unlike. This unlikeness, therefore, must be removed. Before they can become alike, one or both must change. Christ can not change. He is the embodiment of the purity from which man at first departed, and to which he must return in order to be a companion of God. Hence Christ can not change. He can not become like the sinner. The sinner can and must become like the Savior. Man alone has departed from original purity; hence he alone must return. Consequently the Savior says: "*you will not come to me, that you may have life.*" "*Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" *The whole distance must be passed over by the sinner, not by the Savior. The sinner is to come to Christ, not Christ to the sinner.* I emphasize this because just here is a great practical blunder in the religious world—a blunder dishonoring to God and ruin-

ous to the souls of men. A large part of the labor performed in the self-styled evangelical churches, is to get Christ to come to the sinner, instead of guiding the sinner to the Savior. On what other principle can they account for the mourning-bench services yet too common in the land? They are not for the purpose of persuading the sinner to come to Christ. He is already persuaded, else he would not be there. He is not only willing to come, but agonizingly anxious. Then what is all this pleading for? It is for the purpose of persuading Christ to come to the sinner. In other words, the object is not to get sinners willing to be saved, *but to get God willing to save them! Praying to get God willing to save a poor penitent sinner!* Could any thing be more contrary to His word, or dishonoring to His divine character?

How many true and honest hearts meeting with the failures so often experienced, and believing that system to be the teaching of the Bible, have turned away in despair to the cold icebergs of infidelity, eternity alone will reveal. The more honest and sincere the seeker, the more irreconcilable the disappointment. If the least insincerity or want of complete surrender to God could be found in the heart, the failure could well be attributed to that, rather than to the unwillingness and partiality of God. But when the heart is searched in vain for such things, and its purest yearnings for God are rejected, infidelity, like the cold, dark shades of death, settles in a night of gloom upon the intelligent, disappointed soul. This is not simply a philosophical theory; it is *bitter experience* as well.

I desire to cast no unworthy reflections upon the thousands of good and honest people thus worshipping.

So unworthy a purpose can find no place in my heart. But I wish to show that the *system* is not of the Bible, but subversive of it. The system, not those holding it, do I condemn. The great work of man, according to the Bible system, is to get *sinners willing to be saved*. God is always ready and willing to save them. The vast majority of those having the Gospel are on the broad road to death, not because God is not willing to save them, but because they are not willing to be saved. They are not willing to let God save them. God will save every man thus favored with the Gospel, *that will let him*. God can save men only through Christ, and men will not come to Christ.

#### THE POWER TO COME.

Since the sinner's salvation is dependent on his coming to Christ, the question arises, Has he the power to come? The words of the Savior inviting him to come, and condemning him for not coming, imply his ability to come. Without ability to come, such language would be but mockery; and the sinner's Friend trifles not with his affections and misfortunes. Had the sinner no power to come, Christ would not invite him, nor condemn him for not coming. Were He to do this, He would be simply trifling with man's misfortunes, and tantalizing his hungry, thirsty soul with the mere shadows of food and drink. Christ came not to mock men, but to save them.

Christ repeatedly invites sinners to come, and always recognizes their *will*: "If any man *will* come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." "And you *will not* come to me, that you may have life." "And whosoever *will*, let him take the

water of life freely." Not of man's inability to come does the Savior speak, but of his unwillingness.

Christ is just as specific in regard to His own willingness to save. He is not "willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." "Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God through him." "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

While so explicit in regard to the sinner's coming to Him, He nowhere speaks of coming to the sinner. This thought has a large place in modern theology, but no place in the Bible. It follows, therefore, that to persuade sinners to come to Christ, not Christ to come to them, is the system of the Bible. If this system is adapted to those for whom it was made, they have the power to come. If it is not adapted to those for whom it was given, it had not its origin in the love and wisdom of God. It would be an impious reflection upon the character of the Author of our salvation, to charge Him with the blunder of not adapting the system of salvation to the ability and wants of those for whom it was made. We conclude, therefore, that the sinner has the power to come to Christ.

#### GOD GIVES THE POWER.

While the sinner has power to come to Christ, this power is not of himself. *No man has the power in and of himself to come to Christ. God alone can give the power.* This is settled beyond all controversy by the language of the Son of God in our text: "No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him." Independent then, of the drawing of the Father, no man can come to Christ. It is only by

the help of God, the power divinely conferred, that he is enabled to come. But with this help he is able. God gives the power, and with it imposes the responsibility.

Every thing in the practical workings of Christianity depends upon the manner of this drawing; upon the nature of the power given. If consistent, our conceptions of this must determine our practice in bringing sinners to Christ.

If we accept the Calvinistic theory, that they are drawn by the immutable decrees of God; that their destiny was determined before time was born, and that all the powers of earth and hell can not change it; then we may do nothing, for there is nothing we can do. This is set forth in the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, as follows:

“By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death.

“These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number is so certain and definite that it can not be either increased or diminished.

“Those of mankind, that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose and the secret council and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of His own free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto; and all to the praise of His glorious grace.

“As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath He, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto, wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto Christ by His Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified and kept by His power through faith unto salvation.



“Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified or saved, but the elect only.

“The rest of mankind, God who was pleased according to the unsearchable council of His own will, whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice.”

How intelligent men who love God can accept such a theory, can never cease to be a matter of amazement. If we accept this, we may in all consistency fold our hands and lie supinely on our backs, for all our efforts can not add one to the number saved. That number can be “neither increased nor diminished” by the actions of men. And those who are saved will be “effectually called unto faith in Christ *by His Spirit working in due season.*” “Neither are any other redeemed by Christ and saved, *but the elect only.*” There is no salvation but for the elect, and these are brought to Christ by the Holy Spirit working in his own time and way. Hence any effort on our part to bring sinners to Christ is utterly useless.

The Armenian theory, most of which is also included in Calvinism, is that man is totally depraved and as powerless to act as a dead body in accepting the Gospel and coming to Christ, till God draws him by the direct influence of the Spirit, which gives him life, and ability to act. This theory makes every case of conversion as much a miracle, and a direct manifestation of divine power, as the raising of Lazarus from the dead. If we accept this, I confess that I can not appreciate the difference between this and the absolute fatality of Calvinism. Men lift their hands in holy horror at the shocking enormities of predestination as interpreted by Calvinists; and, at the same time, ac-

cept the doctrine of miraculous conversion by the direct and personal power of the Holy Spirit. Indeed this is the badge of orthodoxy; and yet it involves the same absurdities involved by the fatalistic view of predestination. There is not a difference worth the naming. They land their votaries at the same port.

Had I not as well be decreed from all eternity to be lost, while my friend is decreed to be saved, "and this independent of faith or good works on the part of either," as to be totally depraved and wholly unable to believe and come to Christ, till God, by a special operation of the Holy Spirit, regenerates me and gives me saving faith, and yet with all my earnest seeking *He will not do it*, while He does it for my friend? If there is an appreciable difference between the two, please to tell us in what it consists. If I can not come to Christ without a direct help that God alone can give, and yet He can not be persuaded to give it, *who is responsible for my not coming?* An untutored savage can unfailingly answer the question. If I am cast into outer darkness through the immutable decrees of fate, and you are there because your salvation depended on a special work of God which He could not be persuaded to do for you, pray tell me the difference. If the gates of heaven are closed against me because Christ never died for me, and they are closed against you because a special gift of God was necessary to your salvation, and that gift was never bestowed, who has the best claim to the favoritism of God? Both theories alike make God responsible for the condemnation of the sinner, and a respecter of persons. This is alike contrary to the clear teaching of the Son of God, and every feeling of justice and right in the hu-

man heart. Without further discussion we dismiss these theories of the way in which the sinner is drawn to Christ. The question, How does God draw sinners to Christ? we are now ready to answer in the light of God's word.

#### MOTIVES.

God draws sinners to Christ by motives. He addresses their intelligence and appeals to their understanding. He thus presents motives as high as heaven and as pure as the throne.

Motives move men in all the activities of life. Motives are not necessarily selfish. They may be as unselfish as the mission of the Son of God to men. God is the author of both the motives and the means by which they are brought to bear upon the heart of the sinner to draw him to Christ. In doing this, He induces men to believe through the testimony given. This is the help which God gives to all alike to bring them to Christ; without it not one could come. Men are thus drawn to Christ; and but for this divine drawing men would be powerless to come.

The motives consist of the love of God, the sacrificial death of Christ, the joys of heaven, the horrors of hell, and the thousand sacred associations connected with the redeemed of God. Without these heaven-ordained motives which thrill with joy the sinner's heart, and arouse within him earnest longings for a holy life and a home in heaven, he can never come to Christ.

Is the sinner insensible of God's love for him? then he can not love God: "For we love him because he first loved us." Is he ignorant of the sacrificial death of Christ? then he knows nothing of the love of God:

“For in this was manifested the love of God toward us . . . that he sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Does he know nothing of the joys of heaven? then he can have no desire to live a life of self-denial in order to get there. Is he ignorant of the terrors of hell? then he will not deprive himself of the sinful pleasures of life in order to shun it.

Thus in the absence of such motives it is impossible that man can seek redemption through the blood of Christ. Till these are known, they are wholly powerless to draw the sinner; and they can be known only through the Bible. Therefore without the word of God the sinner could never find a Savior. Because divine revelation asserts it, we know that “God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have eternal life.” But for this it could never be known. We know that Christ died for our sins, because the Bible says so, otherwise it could never be known. We know that heaven is a world of bliss—the home of the righteous in sinless purity, and that hell is a place of torment—the destiny of the wicked as the consequence of their unpardoned sins, because the Bible so declares it; and this is the absolute source and limit of our knowledge.

Without these motives as presented in the word of God, the sinner can not come to Christ. He is powerless, for he has nothing to move his will. “For he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” No one can come without believing, and no one can believe without hearing, and no one can hear except as the Father speaks. So the Father draws by His

words of love. This is clearly expressed in the language of our text. Let us carefully consider it.

“No man can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.”

It is clearly expressed that no man can come to Christ unless God draws him. This has been greatly emphasized by certain classes of religionists, to show man's utter inability to act in conversion. And it is just as clearly expressed that they are drawn by being taught, and that this teaching is for all. But on this they have been mum. It would spoil the theory. The Son of God is not allowed to explain Himself, lest He spoil their theology! And this sin of tampering with the truth of God to sustain a theory, is amazingly prevalent. We have seen it much nearer home than we like.

It is by being taught of God; by hearing and learning of the Father; that we are enabled to see the goodness and the love of God, the death and suffering of Christ, the heinous character of sin, and the rich provision of redemption through Christ. These awaken the sinner to a sense of his lost condition, and arouse within him an interest in the salvation of his soul. Thus he is made *willing* to come to Christ.

It is also by being taught of God; by hearing and learning of the Father; that he is enabled to know the *conditions* on which he may come and be accepted as a child of God. The sinner can not come to Christ without complying with the conditions of his coming; he

can not comply with these till he knows them; he can not know them till the Father reveals them. Hence he must be taught of God. He must hear and learn of the Father.

Man having gone out from the presence of God, and forfeited all right to divine clemency, it is all of grace or kindness on the part of God to offer him salvation on any terms. Certainly then the right to stipulate the terms belongs to God; not to man. These terms are found only in the Bible. God has therein revealed them. But for this teaching the sinner could never know how to come to Christ; or even that there is a Christ to whom he can come. Hence his absolute dependence on being taught of God; on hearing and learning of the Father.

In order to more fully illustrate the manner in which God draws sinners to Christ, it may be well to note various things which the Bible teaches, and the religious world accept, as essential to the sinner's coming to Christ, and induction into His kingdom. Taking these in their natural order, we shall begin with

#### LIGHT.

Taking the sinner in his most extreme distance from God, what does he first need to help him to Christ? The Bible answers, *Light*—spiritual, divine light—the light that emanates from Him who is the Light of the world. This must first penetrate the benighted mind of the sinner, and turn his eye to the Star of Bethlehem. No one can be a child of God while he walks in darkness. “But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from

all sin." The mission of the great Apostle to the Gentiles was "to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Satan fully understands that divine light will lead to God, and that darkness will keep people subjects of his dominion. Hence he labors to keep men in darkness: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

Here a part of the human family are represented as lost because they are blind; and that Satan has blinded them. Their blindness is not due to the God of heaven, but to the god of this world.

It is not necessary that one be an outbreking sinner in order to be lost. He can go to perdition in a more respectable way. This, Satan clearly understands. He knows that if he can only keep the light of the Gospel out of his heart, he will secure his purpose. Hence he manages to place something between Christ and the sinner, that its blighting shadow may fall upon his heart. And it is astonishing what *small* things will accomplish this end. A dime before the eye will totally eclipse the king of day. So the most trifling things are used by Satan to keep the world in the cold, dark shades of disbelief and disobedience. Light, then, is the first essential thing, that the sinner may find his way to Christ. How this light is obtained is placed beyond controversy by the word of God: "The entrance of thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple." The light, then, that guides the sinner to Christ, shines through the word of God. Christ is the



Light of the world. His disciples reflect this light. It is embodied in the divine word. Hence, in order to the reception of this light, one must be taught of God. He must hear and learn of the Father. Being thus taught, he can walk in the light of the Father to the arms of His Son.

#### FAITH.

That faith is essential to one's coming to Christ, is accepted without controversy. Faith is that condition of the mind and heart which results from believing. The value of faith depends on the thing believed. The faith that saves the soul is a trusting reliance on Christ for salvation when we comply with the conditions on which He has promised it. To believe with the whole heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, produces a state of mind and heart not hitherto realized. It leads one to believe all that He says, and do all that He directs, because He is Lord, and His word is, therefore, law. It leads one to trust Him for salvation, because He has promised it, and it is in no other name. It leads him to govern his life by Christ's directions, because His wisdom, not ours, is the governing principle of life. Thus the whole life is controlled by faith in Jesus as the Son of God.

While faith is essential to the sinner's coming to Christ, it can of itself possess no virtue. The virtue is not in believing, but in the thing believed. Did I believe that Jesus was simply the great model of humanity; that He was only a great moral teacher, such as the world has never otherwise had; that He was a great "medium," and that all His wonderful works were on the principle of modern Spiritualism,—

my faith in Him as such, however strong, would but lead to a prostitution of life, and end in eternal condemnation. But if I believe Him to be the Messiah, the Son of God, I consequently believe that He died for my sins, and rose again for my justification. This leads me to put my life into His hands, which controls it here in harmony with His will, and leads me at last to His home on high.

If we believe that Jesus is the Christ, we believe all He says, and accept all that He directs. We concede that it is His prerogative to *command*, and ours to *obey*. We walk in the path of obedience, not because of faith in the thing we do, but because of *faith in Him who commanded it*. The thing believed regulates the life, and brings it into conformity to the divine will. Thus are we saved by faith in Christ.

Eating is a condition of natural life. No one can live without it. But there is no virtue in the act of eating. If so, we could live on saw-dust as well as the most choice food. The virtue is in the thing eaten. Hence our condition depends on the nature of what we eat. If it be bad, it is followed by deleterious effects. If it is healthful and nourishing, vigorous life is the result. Hence whether eating be a blessing or a curse, depends on the thing eaten. Just so of believing: the thing believed will make it either a blessing or a curse.

The faith, then, which prepares us in mind and heart to come to Christ, is not faith in any view of Him, but faith in Him as the Son of God and the world's divine Redeemer. This produces trust in Him as *our* Savior when we walk in submission to His will.

How this faith is obtained is so clearly revealed that

discussion would be useless but for the fact that it has been so strangely perverted in modern theology.

The popular theory that faith is a direct gift of God, involves all the dreadful consequences of fatalism. If faith is a direct gift of God, without which I can not be saved, and this gift He withholds from me even though I agonizingly pray to Him for it, has He made provision? If so, how? Yet this is the teaching of many who spurn Calvinism with holy indignation! God can not save men by special gifts which He gives to one and withholds from another, and be the just, impartial God of the Bible, who is no respecter of persons.

How, then, do we obtain the faith that saves the soul by bringing us to Christ? Leaving the God-dishonoring speculations of men, we will let Christ and the Apostles answer the question.

In His intercessory prayer for the union of His disciples, Jesus said: "Neither pray I for these [the Apostles] alone, but for all them also that shall believe on ME *through their word*." The faith which the Master requires in order to this unity, is in *Him*, and through the testimony of the Apostles.

Near the close of his testimony concerning the Christ, John says: "And many other signs truly did Jesus, in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life through his name." If the "evangelical" world insist that this is "historical faith," be it so; then it is "historical faith" that gives life through the name of Christ. Thus John understood that faith comes through the word of God.

After summing up the whole thing, Paul thus expresses his conclusion: "So, then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Therefore faith comes by the word of God. We can not come to Christ without faith, and faith comes by hearing the word of God; therefore we must all be taught of God; must hear and learn of the Father, before we can come to Christ.

#### REPENTANCE.

Those who believe the Bible, admit that one can not come to Christ without repentance. For "except you repent you shall all likewise perish." How, then, do we obtain repentance? This is an important question. Is it a direct gift of God, as taught by the sectarian world? If so—and "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"—why does He not give repentance to all, and thus save all? But, seeing He does not do this, who is responsible for the condemnation of those to whom He gives no repentance? To answer these questions, and avoid the like consequences of fatalism, certainly furnish a fine field for the dialectician. Is the repentance of the agonizing "seeker at the mourner's bench" the gift of God? If so, why does He not pardon him? Is the repentance defective? Then why does He not give him true repentance? These and many other questions involving the justice of God and the truthfulness of His word, are suggested by the mourning-bench scenes of the day, till the heart grows sick with what we are compelled to regard as a reflection upon the character of God. Not that sinners should not be prayed for, but that this is not the way nor the purpose in and

for which we should pray for them. It is not praying for sinners to which we object. That is scriptural and right. But we may not pray for their pardon while they have not obeyed the Gospel. This is contrary to the divine will.

Repentance is an *act of obedience*. It is something we are commanded to do; not something done for us. Repentance is an act of obedience, and every act of obedience must be from faith; therefore faith must precede repentance. Without faith, there can be no repentance toward the object of faith. Did we not believe in Christ, and rely upon Him for salvation, we would obey none of His commandments. Since the repentance which Christ requires can not exist without faith in Him, it follows that that which is necessary to produce faith, is also necessary to produce repentance. Hence, as faith comes by the word of God, the same word is necessary to repentance. With this agrees the testimony of Paul, that the goodness of God leads us to repentance: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" The goodness of God is manifest in all His wondrous works. Nature with her ten thousand tongues but speaks His goodness and love. His goodness is seen in the dew-drop that glistens in the morning light, reflecting the world in its bosom, as if Nature had bathed the earth in her tears. It is seen in the shower—"the early and the latter rains"—which cool the fevered face of Nature, and send from its throbbing heart a new pulse of life. It is seen in the rainbow painted by the hand of God on the canvas of the sky, reminding us of His covenant that He will not

again deluge the world with water. It is seen in the floweret that blooms by the wayside in more gorgeous array than Solomon in all his glory, reminding us that God, who so clothes the grass of the field, will not forget the wants of His loving children. It is seen in the golden harvest that waves in the summer breeze, rewarding the husbandman for his toil, and blessing the world with abundance. It is seen in the night as she draws her sable curtains round the world, and bids it seek repose. It is seen in the day as it fills the world with its light and warmth, and awakens it into new life. But all this combined, which bankrupts human language to express, sinks into utter insignificance when compared with the goodness of God as it reaches its grand climax in the death of Jesus Christ. It is the goodness of God, as manifest on the hill of Calvary, that touches the sinner's heart and woos him to repentance. But the goodness of God, as manifest in the death of His Son, can never lead a sinner to repentance till he hears of it. He can hear of it only through the word of God; therefore he must hear and learn of the Father before he can repent and come to Christ.

#### CONVERSION.

Convert means to turn. Conversion is a turning. The unconverted sinner is not only separated from Christ, but he is turned away from Him. He is going in the opposite direction. He can not come to Christ till he turns to Him. In this he is active. He is not turned, but he turns. It is something he does, not something done for him. In the King James' Version it is incorrectly put in the passive voice—"be con-

verted." But the Greek is always active. Hence the Revised Version does not contain the term "be converted." It is "turn"; and the sinner is required to do the turning. The sinner will not turn to Christ in heart and life till he believes in Him as his Savior. This belief is not a mere assent of the mind, but a loving, trusting reliance on Him for salvation when obedient to His will. One can never love the Savior, and rely on Him for salvation, till that Savior is revealed to him. No man ever loved Christ who had not heard of Him. God's love, as manifest in the death of His Son, never yet touched and tendered one heart that had not heard of it. The story of the cross is ever powerless to move a heart till it is heard. Hence no man was ever converted to Christ without being taught of God; without hearing and learning of the Father.

This, Paul affirms: We can not be converted without believing in Christ. We can not believe in Christ without hearing of Him. We can not hear of Him without a preacher: "How, then, shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. x: 14.) At that time the New Testament was not written, and all were dependent on the living preacher for their knowledge of the Gospel of Christ. The Gospel was committed to "earthen vessels," that the excellency of the glory might be of God, and not of men.

God and men are both active in the work of conversion. God provided the Gospel, which is His power unto salvation; and men are active in its reception and in complying with its provisions.



God draws men to Christ by the cords of His love. We come to Christ because we love God and His Son. "We love God because He first loved us." But God's love for us could never produce our love for Him had it not been revealed. This is done in the Bible. Hence our love of God, by which we are brought to the Savior, is produced by being taught of God; by hearing and learning of the Father.

#### OBEDIENCE.

Our coming to Christ implies obedience to Him. If we accept Him as our Lord, we must obey His commands: "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" If we come to Christ in faith, repentance, and a converted heart—a heart changed in its affections and purposes; turned from the love of sin to the love of God—we come to place ourselves under His government and to do His will. But before we can come to Christ in obedience we must know how He would have us come. No man was ever permitted to come to God in his own way. Men are not permitted to elect their own methods of approach to God. In every age they have been required to come in faith; and he who comes in faith must come as directed. Since faith comes by the word of God, the faith of the Bible can not exist where God has not spoken. The obedience of faith is the obedience of divine direction. He who comes to Christ, must come by the direction of Him to whom all authority is given in heaven and on earth. This direction can be known only as it is revealed to us. It is revealed to us only in the Bible. Hence, before we can come to Christ in obedience, we must be all

taught of God ; we must hear and learn of the Father. A short recapitulation, and I close.

We have seen that Christ and the sinner are apart. Before they can be united they must come together. The sinner must come to the Savior, not the Savior to the sinner. This the sinner can do only as God draws him. God draws him by giving him the light of the Gospel. By this He produces within him faith in Christ. This leads him to repentance. He is thus induced to love the Savior, and to turn from his evil way to the way of life. He thus surrenders to the authority of Christ, takes His name and government upon him, and lives in submission to His divine will. None of these can exist without God's revelation. Hence, in order to each step in the entire process, the sinner is drawn to Christ by being taught of God ; by hearing and learning of the Father.

## SERMON X.

## THE WILL OF GOD.

“Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.”—*Matt. vii: 21.*

OUR Divine Lord taught nothing more plainly on earth than the fact that men have something to *do* in order to be saved. Nothing in all His teaching did He emphasize more than this. Yet, strange to say, nothing is more disparaged by modern orthodox teachers. The very thing that Jesus emphasized as an indispensable condition of admission into the kingdom of God, they belittle and often ridicule. George O. Barnes was reported as saying: “I regret that the word *do* is in the Bible; only believe is the true doctrine;” and the people said, Amen! But the word is in the Bible, and the Son of God put it there. What the Divine Lord put in the sacred Volume, it is wicked for any man to want out. We have as much right to disregard one word of the great Teacher as another, and he who disparages any one ignores the wisdom of Jesus Christ in that respect, and sets up his own in its place. To ignore the teaching of Jesus in one respect is to ignore it in all. To accept only what suits us, is to measure the Son of God by our own standard. He who disregards the teaching of Jesus in any respect, disregards His authority; and he who disregards His authority dethrones our coronated Lord.

Men have something to do in order to be saved,

else Jesus did not understand the principles of His own system of salvation. In the conclusion of His grand "sermon on the mount," delivered the second year of His ministry, He makes the difference between doing and not doing the things which He says, the exact difference between a wise man and a fool. Those who hear His words and *do* them, are wise, building on a rock. But those who hear and do *not*, are foolish, building on the sand. The difference, then, is not in hearing, nor in believing; but simply in *doing*. Doing is the *rock* foundation. Doing not, is the *sand* foundation. The man who hears and *does* is wise. The man who hears and does *not* is foolish. Therefore the whole orthodox theory of disparaging *doing* as a condition of admission into the kingdom of God, is on a sand foundation, and is a foolish thing.

If we accept Jesus as Lord, we are under obligation to do what He says. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" was one of His withering rebukes to those who claim to accept Him as their Lord and Master, and yet lightly estimate or disregard some of the things which He enjoins. The estimate in which that large class is held, and the consequences of their position, are thus expressed by the divine Master: "Not every one that says unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father who is in heaven." The difference, then, according to the Savior's own estimate, between doing and not doing the will of God, is the difference between being in and out of the kingdom of heaven. He who does the will is in. He who does it not is out. This difference is not one of theory. It is not one of opinion or specula-

tion. It is not between believing and not believing, in the theoretical sense of that word. It is simply between doing and not doing. And this difference is the exact difference between being saved and lost.

#### WILL AND LAW.

A rule of action laid down by a superior to be obeyed by an inferior, is, in substance, I understand, Blackstone's definition of law. But in a more comprehensive sense, law is an expression or impression of will. An expression or impression of the will of the law-making power, is law. Impressed law is what we call natural law. When God spoke the worlds into existence He impressed upon each His will, and that was the law of its existence. The "laws of nature," which alike control the worlds that roll in space and the mote that dances before your eye, are simply the impressions of the Divine will. On all nature the will of God is impressed; but with regard to man it is also expressed. The etymology of the word implies that it was pressed out. The great loving heart of God was moved with compassion toward a world that had wandered away from Him; and His will, in regard to their return to His loving, outstretched arms, was pressed out.

God first taught man to speak, and then talked to him in the simple language that He gave him. Whether man would ever have spoken, had God not spoken to him, is a controverted question. Whether or not he would have invented a language in the ages, God did not wait for time to determine, but gave him a simple speech at the beginning. As Newton says: "God's greatest gifts to man were religion and

speech; and God gave him religion in giving him speech."

A word is the sign of an idea. It is not the idea, but simply the sign of it. It is the wrapper, with the thought wrapped within—the envelope containing the idea. When the word meets the eye or falls upon the ear, the envelope remains without, while the thought which it contains passes within and makes its impression on the mind. Thus it is that speech is the channel of thought. In this way the mind of God is conveyed to the mind of men. When God wished to make man understand His will, He used words, the meaning of which was understood. The words fell upon the ear of man and the thought passed within and made its impression upon his understanding. He never addressed man in language that he did not understand. It would be a great gain if all men were God-like even in this respect.

When God spake to Adam, and forbade the fruit of a specified tree, from that moment forward Adam was under law in respect to it. Previous to this he was not. While the thought remained in the mind of God, unexpressed, it was not law to him; but the moment it was expressed that moment it became law. The unexpressed will of God in regard to the forbidden fruit, was not law. It needed *expression* to make it such. In the mind of God, the will before its expression was just what it was after its expression; but with man it was far otherwise. Before God thus expressed His will, Adam could have innocently done that which afterwards deluged the world in tears and blood. The consequences of eating the forbidden fruit were due

to the fact that it was *prohibited*. They were not inherent in the fruit as such.

The will of any law-making power, when expressed, becomes law. In monarchies the will of the monarch becomes law to his subjects so soon as he gives it expression. In republics, where the people rule, the will of the people, when expressed, becomes the law of the country. It matters not what the will of the people may be, or what it is informally known to be, it must have formal expression before it becomes law. I am careful to state these facts even to repetition, because I shall have use for them.

After the fall of man God no longer talked with him face to face. Polluted by sin he could not stand in the Divine Presence. Hence, in this state of alienation on the part of man, it is important to inquire as to

#### HOW GOD REVEALED HIS WILL.

During the four thousand years in which God was preparing the world for the Messiah, He veiled Himself in clouds and symbols through which He spake to man. This method was used for special occasions. But for the greater part, He inspired men by His Spirit, and through them made known His will. In this way the whole of the Old Testament is an inspired record. But this was not the "perfection" of the scheme of redemption for which He was preparing the world. God had "reserved some better thing for us, that they, without us, should not be made perfect." We come, therefore, to contemplate this perfection.

The New Testament is generally called the "will or Testament of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."



“Testament” and “will” mean the same. The New Testament is, therefore, the new will. It is the new will of God. It is also the will of Christ, because He made it; all authority in heaven and on earth being given to Him; and it is exercised therein. It is the will of God in that the will of the Father and the Son is one.

Considering the New Testament, or will, as a document, it is pertinent to ask,—

#### HOW CAME WE IN POSSESSION OF IT?

The importance of this question will be seen when we consider that when Jesus left the earth and went home to His Father, not a line of the book, as we now have it, was written. Christ is the author of it; every word of it came from Him; and yet He left the world without writing a line of it.

Before Jesus left the world He told His Apostles that He would send them the Holy Spirit; that the Spirit would come as His Advocate; that, as such, He would convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He would convict them of sin for not believing on Christ; of Christ's righteousness, because God had raised Him from the dead, which He would not have done had Jesus been other than what He claimed; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. Christ conquered Satan, the prince of this world; hence He will judge the world in righteousness at the last day. The Holy Spirit was to do all this by testimony. He was to testify by speaking. He was to speak through the Apostles. He was to bring to their minds all that they had learned of Christ. He was not to speak of Himself—that is, by His own authority; but what He heard from Christ, that He was

to speak. He was to take the words of Christ and give them to the Apostles, and the Apostles to the people. (John xvi: 1-15; xv: 27; Matt. x: 20.) Consequently the Apostles wrote or spoke the words which the Spirit imparted to them, and these words the Spirit received from Christ on the throne. The Holy Spirit was the medium of communication between the throne of God and the hearts of men. When Christ wished to impart a thought, He expressed it to the Holy Spirit; the Spirit gave it to an Apostle just as He received it; and the Apostle gave it to the people in the same way. They spake "not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches." Thus every inspired thought came fresh and warm from the throne of the coronated King of kings and Lord of lords, and found a lodgment in the hearts of men. Thus it was that what the Apostles bound on earth was first bound in heaven, and what they loosed on earth was loosed in heaven. It was in the mind of Christ before it was imparted to the Apostles.

Long after Jesus had gone home to His Father, an Apostle, or any other inspired man, could sit down and give us an infallible account of the life of Jesus—His teaching, His miracles, and all that they saw fit to give. While Jesus was with them they had very short memories in regard to some things, on account of their prejudices. Though Jesus had often told them of His death and resurrection, yet they lost all hope when He died, and received the story of His resurrection as an idle tale. But now the Holy Spirit brings to their minds all things whatsoever that they have learned of Christ. So that with infallible accuracy they can write their testimony concerning Him as we have it in Mat-

thew, Mark, Luke, and John. So of all the other books composing the inspired volume. They all come from the throne of the coronated Christ, through the Divine Spirit, and through those whom He guided into all the truth.

The word will is frequently used in the New Testament, and it is used in two distinct senses. There are, therefore,

#### TWO DISTINCT IDEAS IN THE WORD WILL.

It is used in a documentary sense, the sense in which we have just considered it, and also in the sense of an expression of the Divine Mind in regard to any specific thought. Anything on which God expresses His mind is His will in regard to that thing. In the investigation of this subject we should be careful to not pass from the one sense to the other so as to blend them where they should be distinct. While a document is called a will, it is simply the embodiment of the will of the testator touching the points mentioned therein. The word "will" in our text—"whosoever does the will"—means the expressed mind of God as embodied in the New Testament. Generally speaking, it is not so much the document as the mind of God expressed in it, that is the thought of the inspired penman. The New Testament was not all written at one time. Much that it contains was circulated before other parts were produced. Hence, when we speak of the will as a document, we can not always include the book as a whole, but only that which constitutes an inseparable feature of it. It has a principle of unity, and, with this in mind, we speak of a part as the whole. For instance, the will went into force before all of it was written.

So of the Old Testament. The last will of God, like the first, went into effect as it was expressed; hence it was not all in effect till it was all expressed.

WHAT RELATION DOES THE NEW WILL SUSTAIN TO  
THE OLD?

The scheme of redemption, to a large extent, as now in force, is involved in the answer to this question. Is it in reality a *new* will, or simply a codicil to the old one? If the latter, then all that is in the old is in force except what the new has changed by specific mention. A codicil affects only so much of the body of a will as it specifies, and with reference to which it mentions the change desired. But a *new* will completely annuls the old. It leaves none of it in force, therefore, except what is specifically re-enacted. The cases, therefore, are just reversed. If the New Testament is an addition to the Old—a codicil to the old will—then all the Old is yet in force except what the New has specifically annulled or changed. But if it be a new will, then the whole of the Old Testament is annulled, and only so much of it is yet in force as is re-enacted in the New. Hence the answer to this question has much to do with determining what is now the will of God.

Nothing is said in the New Testament about its being an addition to the Old. Spoken of as a will, it is never called a codicil, but always a new will. It also speaks of the Old as disannulled by the New. The new covenant which God promised to make in the last days with the house of Judah, was the plan of salvation through Christ embodied in the New Testament. This was in contrast with the old covenant, embodied in the Old Testament. Of these two cove-

nants Paul says: "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. But that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." From these and many other passages, it is clear that the New Testament embodies a new will. This, by virtue of its nature, annuls the old, except what is re-enacted, and what, *by virtue of its nature, is not affected by legislation.* This includes all *historical facts* and *moral principles.* All such things have all the force and value they ever had, because they are not subject to legislation. Moral principles and historical facts embodied in an old will can not be changed by a new one. In all matters of *legislative authority* the old will is annulled by the new; but its facts, its morality, and its unchanging principles remain ever the same.

#### WHEN DID THE NEW WILL GO INTO FORCE?

Much depends on the answer to this question. The provisions of a will amount to nothing legally till the will goes into force. As this is a new will, annulling the old, the old ceases to be authoritative when the new goes into effect. It is important, therefore, to consider the question as to when the will went into force. Several distinct things enable us to answer the question with a high degree of accuracy.

1. It could not go into force till after the death of Christ. It is a well known fact that a will can not go into force during the life of the testator. While he lives he is independent of it, and may change or annul it at any time. But it is unalterably established by his death. Speaking of the new covenant, as in contrast with the old, Paul says: "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of

the testator. . For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." Christ is the testator of the new will; consequently, as a document, it could not go into force while He lived.

2. It could not go into force till it was expressed. Till it was expressed, it did not exist; hence it could not be in force. When Christ left the earth and went home to His Father, not a line of the will as we now have it was written. Hence it could not be in force at that time. All that the Apostles knew at this time about the teaching of Jesus, was by their unaided memories, and these were very defective. They knew nothing accurately, and hence were not intrusted with even the simple story of the resurrection. They were under positive prohibition to tell any man that Jesus was the Christ. Had He left them without removing the prohibition, at the time indicated, they would have been in honor bound to go down to their graves with the absorbing secret locked up in their bosoms. It is evident, therefore, that the will, of which they were executors, was not in force at that time. They were not yet enabled to understand it with infallible certainty, even what little they had heard; and the privilege of announcing it to the world was yet withheld. It could not possibly be in force under such circumstances.

3. The line of communication between the throne of God and the hearts of men, through which every sentence of the will, as we now have it, came, was not established till after Christ left the world. We have seen in the former part of this sermon how this was done. I shall not repeat it. This line was established after the coronation of Christ, and the first communi-

cations through it were on the day of Pentecost. From that day till the close of the inspired volume, the will of Christ came exclusively through that channel, constituting the New Testament, as we now have it. The previous teaching of Jesus was brought to the minds of the Apostles in this way, and the records we have of His life were through this channel. Only through this have we an infallible sentence of Christ's will. Since the will all came through this channel, it follows that the will was not expressed till the channel was established. It could not be in force till it was expressed. The line was not established till the day of Pentecost. Hence the will did not go into force till this day. These and other considerations show conclusively that the will of Christ, as now embodied in the New Testament, went into force on the first Pentecost after His death and resurrection.

Much confusion concerning the way of salvation has grown out of the fact that due consideration has not been given to the question as to when the will went into force. The case of the thief and others during the personal ministry of Christ is introduced to show that baptism is not now a condition of the will. They fail to observe that at that time the will had not gone into force. It had not been expressed. The Testator was living, and could dispense His favors as He saw fit independently of the will which He afterwards made. What He did before His will was made is no criterion by which to judge of what He will do since the will has gone into force. Before God expressed to Adam His mind concerning the forbidden fruit, he was free to eat it. He was under no law concerning it. But after the divine mind was expressed it bound



him in that regard. He was no longer free to do what he was free to do before. So with regard to baptism. Baptism is a provision of the new will. Hence before the will went into force men were under no obligation to observe it. It was not required. It was not God's will that it should be observed. But so soon as the will went into force this condition, like all the rest, became binding.

IS THE INHERITANCE BEQUEATHED IN THE WILL  
CONDITIONAL?

After reading the plain and simple statements of the New Testament the above question would appear superfluous, but for the fact that the blinding theories of men cause them to answer the question negatively. One of the strangest features in modern theology is, that conditions detract from grace; that if salvation be conditional, on our part, it can not be all of grace. For such a conclusion we see not one particle of reason. Salvation is all a gift; but this does not hinder its being conditional. A gift may be bestowed on certain conditions, and the conditions have in them nothing of merit to detract from the grace of the giver. Conditions may be arbitrary, or they may be beneficial in their effects. Should a millionaire give all his fortune to a poor orphan on condition that he become his adopted son, does that destroy the grace of the giver and make the inheritance a matter of merit? Some conditions on which God bestows the inheritance bequeathed in His will are beneficial in their nature to those complying with them, as will hereafter appear. The will is made in favor of the family, and the inheritance is to the children: "If children, then

heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." If the will were not conditional the whole race would be saved. But we are told that the "wicked *shall* be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God."

#### WHAT ARE ITS CONDITIONS?

Since the will is conditional all should be deeply concerned to know the conditions. Suppose one should die leaving you a large estate, how would you act in regard to it? If it were conditional, would you not be careful to know the conditions and to comply with them? Would you comply with some of them and disregard others, and then claim the inheritance? Could you claim the inheritance while *one* condition on which it was bestowed was not complied with? Would you go into court and plead that some of these conditions were non-essential? You know you would not. Will you then be indifferent to the conditions on which the heavenly Father bestows the gracious inheritance upon His children? Do not treat God as you would not your fellow-man. Be honest with God and honest with your own soul.

#### FAITH.

Faith in Christ is made a condition of salvation, hence a condition of the great inheritance: "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have eternal life." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "Many other signs truly did Jesus that are not written in this book, but these are

written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." These and many other passages of the divine word show conclusively that faith in Christ as the Son of God is a condition of salvation through Him.

#### REPENTANCE.

"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." "The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." "Except you repent you shall all likewise perish." Such statements as these by the Spirit of inspiration will satisfy all who believe the Bible, that repentance is also a condition of salvation.

#### BAPTISM.

While the believing world generally concede that faith and repentance are conditions of salvation, they deny a like position to baptism. Yet the Holy Scriptures are about as clear in the one case as in the other. Jesus says: "He that believes *and is baptized*, shall be saved." How could He add "*and is baptized*," if baptism was not a condition of the salvation promised? It would simply be misusing words; misleading the children of men. Then Peter said to the heart-stricken multitude on Pentecost: "Repent *and be baptized* every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ *for the remission of sins*." Ananias said to the penitent Saul: "Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." They were not to be

washed away in water, for water has no such virtue; but by the blood of Christ, which cleanses from all sin. This blood is reached in obeying Him—in being “*baptized into His death*,” where His blood was shed. Peter says: “Baptism doth also now save us,” and this salvation is “not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” The salvation secured through baptism, but not by virtue of it, is not a ceremonial cleansing of the flesh, as that secured by Jewish washings, but one that reached the conscience. Hence cleansing the conscience from sin is the salvation thus obtained. These and other passages of Scripture show conclusively that baptism, like faith and repentance, is a condition of obtaining the great inheritance bequeathed in the Father’s will.

It is argued by many that if baptism were a condition it would be essential under all circumstances, and object to it on this ground. But this is not correct. Faith is not required of those who have not the opportunity of believing, or the power to believe. So baptism may not be required of those who have not the opportunity, without affecting the fact of its being a condition.

#### A GODLY LIFE.

By faith, repentance and baptism, we become God’s children—adopted into the royal family. But the heavenly inheritance is not yet secure. It is yet conditioned on a Godly life. We are to add to our faith the Christian virtues. The inheritance is conditioned on continuing God’s children. And if we are His children His Spirit will dwell in us. And if the Spirit be in us, its fruits will be manifest in our lives.

These are love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, patience, faith. We are to keep ourselves free from sin by continually seeking forgiveness at the altar of prayer. By thus keeping ourselves in the love of God we are enabled at all times through life's journey, till the peaceful hour of death, to

“Read our titles clear  
To mansions in the skies.”

## SERMON XI.

## THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRITS.

“The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him.”—*Rom. viii: 16, 17.*

PERHAPS no other passage in the word of God is so frequently referred to, and so confidently relied upon, by the denominational world, to sustain them in their theory of divine acceptance, as this text. It matters not how widely they may differ one from another, each relies with equal confidence on this statement as proof that they are accepted of God. The reason of this is, the whole thing is an assumption; and it is just as easy for one party to assume as another. They assume, without a shadow of divine testimony, that a certain class of feelings is the witness of the Spirit. One denomination can have this as well as another, however conflicting their theology; hence all alike rely upon the passage as proof that they are God's children. It is strange that this assumption should be so general, by those of conflicting theories, when the word of God nowhere states, or even hints, that a certain class of feelings is the witness of the Spirit, or evidence of divine acceptance. We fearlessly state that no man can put his finger on such a passage in God's word.

The sectarian theory in regard to this subject is not only a groundless assumption, but its spirit is so ar-

rogant that if one does not accept that theory, he is charged with not having the witness of the Spirit, and with not believing in it. Modesty would at least suggest that the thing itself and their theory of it are possibly two different things; that one may have that, and not this. But that is a quality with which they are not overburdened in this regard.

The denominational theory of "the witness of the Spirit" is made to cover a multitude of sins. Each assumes to have the witness. This they hold as proof of divine acceptance. And this, in turn, is proof of the correctness, in essentials, of their theological system; for it is evident that God would not thus accept as His children those teaching or practicing fatal error. Hence all kinds of contradictory theories and practices are accepted of God. This alone should condemn the theory with all thoughtful people. What thus makes God contradict Himself and His own word, is clearly wrong.

Am I a child of God? It is impossible to overestimate the

#### IMPORTANCE OF THE QUESTION.

If I am a child of God, then I am an heir of heaven. I belong to the royal family. All the blessings and privileges and promises of the Gospel are mine; and heaven, with all its honors and joys, awaits me when life's conflict is over. If I am not His child, all is lost. Life is a failure. The beast of the field is far more to be envied. No matter what else I am, if I am not a child of God I have missed the great end of my being, and life is worse than a failure. There is nothing, therefore, on which the soul should rest with more certainty



than the answer to the question. God designs His children to be happy; to be full of confidence. This could not be, if they were left in doubt on this all-absorbing question. On this question God's people anciently had perfect assurance; and we may have the same assurance now. Paul said to the Corinthians: "We *know* that when our earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." The same confident language is frequently used. The Bible clearly teaches that we may know whether or not we are God's children. If we are in doubt on this question, as millions are, the fault is ours, not God's. We are responsible for our own doubts.

#### THE PROPOSITION.

The proposition to be proved is, that I am a child of God. This includes two others. It is evident that I can not now be a child of God unless I, at some time in the past, became one. And this is not enough. I may once have become a child, and yet not be one now. Hence it must be proved that this relationship has not been forfeited. Our judgment is that thousands of people were once God's children, but are not now. This was the case in New Testament times, and it ever will be. Some are ready to deny this, saying that your child can never cease to be your child. This is true of a child after the flesh, but not of a child by adoption; and we are God's children by adoption. Hence the relationship does not necessarily remain unbroken.

## THE WITNESSES.

To establish this proposition there are two witnesses. These are the Holy Spirit and our own spirit. They bear their joint testimony. The testimony of each is peculiar to itself, and each is infallible in its place. The testimony of neither alone is sufficient; but combined they establish the proposition with infallible certainty.

The sectarian theory makes but one witness—the Holy Spirit. It bears testimony *to* our spirit. This is done in some mysterious kind of way, and our spirit is the recipient of it. But the inspired word makes two witnesses, and they bear their testimony jointly. If the testimony of the two agree, the proposition is established.

I now invite your careful attention to the

## NATURE OF THE TESTIMONY.

As the testimony of each witness is peculiar to itself, let us examine it separately. First, how does the Holy Spirit testify in this case? Without some intimation to the contrary, which we have not, we must conclude that He testifies in this case just as it is clearly stated that He does in others. I propose to let the Spirit of God himself answer the question as to how He testifies or bears witness.

On the night of the betrayal Jesus said to His sorrowing disciples that if He departed He would send them the Comforter—the Holy Spirit. He was to come as Christ's special Advocate. And when He came He was to convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He was to convict the

world of sin for not believing on Christ. (John xvi: 9.) He was to convict them by testimony. (John xv: 26, 27.) He was to testify by speaking. (xvi: 13.) He was to guide the Apostles into all the truth, and speak through them. (xvi: 13-15, and Matt. x: 19, 20.) These facts are plainly stated by the Son of God. The Holy Spirit, inspiring the Apostles, and guiding them into all the truth, was to convict the world of sin. He was to do this by testimony, He was to testify by speaking, and He was to speak through the Apostles. This is precisely what He did when He came as the Advocate of Christ. Three thousand were convicted of sin on the first day of His administration. They were convicted by testimony, the testimony was given by speaking, and the speaking was through an Apostle. Peter spake as the Spirit gave him utterance. His words were the words of the Holy Spirit. His testimony was the testimony of the Holy Spirit. His work was the work of the Holy Spirit. Here the way in which the Spirit was to bear witness of Christ, and of His power and work in saving the world from sin, is clearly stated. And this covers the whole ground of the Spirit's work in carrying on and consummating the scheme of redemption. We find no intimation in all the Inspired Volume of any witness to the contrary. But in every case in which the Holy Spirit is made a witness, He testifies in precisely this way.

In the tenth chapter of Hebrews, the Holy Spirit is called as a witness to testify in regard to the new covenant; that under it sins were to be completely blotted out and remembered no more. On this point Paul says:

“The Holy Spirit also beareth witness to us: for after he hath said,

“This is the covenant that I will make with them,

“After those days, saith the Lord;

“I will put my laws on their heart,

“And upon their mind also will I write them;

“Then saith he,

“And their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”

Here the Apostle makes a quotation from Jeremiah and calls it the testimony of the Holy Spirit. What the Spirit spoke through the prophet is by Paul called the witness of the Spirit. So what the inspired record says on any subject, is the witness or testimony of the Spirit on that subject.

We have a similar statement by Peter. Speaking of the great salvation through Christ, foretold by the prophets, he says: “Of which salvation the prophets inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” (I. Pet. i: 10, 11.) The Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets concerning the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow; and what the Spirit thus said is called His testimony. The prophets earnestly sought to understand their own language, dictated by the Spirit, both as to the thing itself, and the time of its manifestation. It follows, therefore, that what inspired men have said on any subject, as they were guided by the Spirit, is the Spirit’s testimony on that subject. Hence

the witness of the Spirit in this case is what the Spirit said through inspired men in regard to it.

The testimony of our own spirit is simply a matter of consciousness. In addition to all that God and Christ and the Holy Spirit have done for us, the Spirit has testified through Christ and the Apostles, that we must believe and do certain things in order to be God's children, and it is simply a matter of consciousness whether or not we have done them. If it is a matter of consciousness that we have done what the Spirit requires, the proposition is established by the joint testimony of the two witnesses, that we are children of God. If, on the other hand, we are conscious of a failure to meet the requirements of the Spirit, the case is clearly settled against us.

For instance, a man is on trial, charged with murder. A testifies to the killing. He saw him strike the blow. He saw the deed done. The killing is established without a shadow of doubt. But that does not establish the charge. The intention; the state of mind of the killer must be established before murder can be proved. It may have been accidental. It may have been a necessity in self-defense. Hence both features of the case must be established. Just so in this. The outward acts of obedience to God required of a life devoted to His service, and the inward state of the soul prompting to the obedience of such a life, must both exist.

But to make our proposition as clear as possible, I shall consider the testimony in the various acts of

#### SPECIFIC OBEDIENCE.

The Son of God, who had the Spirit without measure, in the commission to His Apostles, requires men

to believe. John says he recorded some of the miracles of Jesus, that men might believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, they might have life through His name. Paul said to the jailer at Philippi: "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." In these and numerous other places the Spirit testifies that we must believe in Christ as the Son of God and our Savior. We call upon our own spirit to testify on this point. That we do thus believe in Christ is simply a matter of consciousness. That we believe in Him as He requires is attested by our willingness to do whatever He directs. If the testimony of our own spirit agrees with that of the Holy Spirit, this point is decided affirmatively, and so far as it goes, the testimony is in our favor that we are the children of God. But if it is a matter of consciousness that we do not believe in Christ and trust Him for salvation by doing His will, the question is settled against us, without going any further, that we are not God's children. No one can be a child of God without believing in Christ; we do not believe in Christ; hence we are not God's children.

The Savior and the Apostles also require that we shall repent. This is the Spirit's testimony through them. It is useless to quote the passages, since they are familiar to all, and denied by none. Whether or not we have repented, so as to resolve upon a life of reformation in the service of God, is simply a matter of consciousness. If we have, the testimony of the two witnesses agrees, and the fact is established. But if the testimony of our own spirit is that we have not repented, the case is settled at once, and settled against us. We are not the children of God.

The Holy Spirit testifies through Christ and the Apostles, that we must be baptized. Jesus said: "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Peter said to inquiring believers: "repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Jesus told Saul to go into the city, and there it should be told him what he must do. Then Ananias said to him: "why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." These and numerous other passages clearly make it the duty of every one to be baptized in order to become a child of God. We become God's children, are adopted into the royal family, by putting on Christ. Hence the Spirit testifies through Paul: "we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

We then call on our own spirit to testify as to whether or not we have been thus baptized. It is clearly a matter of consciousness that we have. The two witnesses agree in their joint testimony. The question is thus settled by the two witnesses that we have become the children of God. But if our spirit testifies that we have not been baptized, it settles the case against us. We need not test it further.

But it may be argued that inasmuch as that which constitutes baptism is a controverted question, it can not be a matter of consciousness as to whether or not one has been baptized. This objection is worthy of the most serious and prayerful consideration. It will be remembered that we stated in the beginning that for whatever of doubt may exist on the question, or any subordinate point concerning it,



## WE AND NOT GOD ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DOUBT.

Many have a good reason to be doubtful as to their baptism. They have accepted that which is in controversy. If one has been sprinkled for baptism, he can not know that he is baptized. Many claim that he is, but equally as many, that he is not; and many more when we accept the Catholics who claim it on the authority of *the Church* and not of *the Book*. But if he is buried with Christ in immersion, he stands on uncontroverted ground. All Bible scholars and critics of all ages and all sects admit that the immersion of a penitent believer is Christian baptism. The controversy on this question amounts to nothing. All Protestant bodies immerse, if demanded, so far as we know. The Greek Catholics immerse only; and the Roman Catholics grant that the Book teaches only immersion. They have changed the ordinance by authority of the "successor of St. Peter, Lord God the Pope!" So that if one is buried with Christ in immersion, he stands on uncontroverted ground, and has not a shadow of doubt as to his baptism. Hence if he occupies a doubtful position, the fault is his, not God's. He may occupy one if he will, about which there is no doubt. There is, doubtless, more doubt in the religious world just here, than we imagine. I once immersed an old lady who had been a devoted Methodist for perhaps forty years. I was baptizing, and she came up unexpectedly to all and demanded immersion. Without a word, except to take her confession, I immersed her. As she came up from the water she exclaimed in the hearing of all, "Thank God! I no longer have any doubts about my baptism."

This showed that she had been in doubt about it, but she had kept her doubts to herself. I had never before heard her express a doubt upon that point, and I had a reasonable right to know her mind, for she was *my own dear old mother!* Thus thousands go through the world doubting their baptism, and keeping it to themselves. For all this, they alone are responsible.

The same doubt exists with regard to infant baptism, only it is intensified. No one can be certain of having been baptized, as the Savior requires, when he has been sprinkled in infancy, and has this only on which to rely. In all the testimony of the Spirit in regard to baptism He never once mentions them in connection with baptism. When the Divine Spirit speaks of baptism, He says nothing of infants. When He speaks of infants, He says nothing of baptism. But in regard to the baptism of a penitent believer, there is absolutely no controversy. All churches, Catholic and Protestant, agree that such is a scriptural subject. Hence if one occupies a doubtful position here, the fault is wholly his own. He may just as easily occupy one in regard to which there is absolutely no doubt. So God is responsible for no man's doubts at this point.

There is another point here worthy of consideration that I do not remember to have ever seen presented. Testifying to our main proposition there are two witnesses, and two only. A third is not admissible. In regard to infant baptism one can not testify for himself. He knows nothing about it. It is not with him a matter of consciousness. His belief as to his baptism rests on the testimony of others. But a third witness is not admissible; hence this point *can*

*not be established.* It has but one witness, while the divine law requires two, *and that one says nothing!*

But when the proposition is established that we become children of God by faith in Christ Jesus—a faith that finds expression in obedience to His will—our work is not yet done. The question now arises

#### HAVE WE CONTINUED IN THE FAITH?

This question must be settled just as was the other. The Holy Spirit testifies as to the kind of life we are to live; the principles by which we are to be governed; the things we must do, and the things we must not do; in order to stand continually accepted of God. And our own spirit testifies as to how our life conforms to these requirements. We are exhorted to keep ourselves in the love of God. This implies that being in God's love depends on our own course of conduct. This course of conduct is clearly designated by the Spirit by whom came the Inspired Volume. But in dealing with sin and human duty and responsibility, it is best to be specific. In this case sin is not all so easily laid at another's door.

In the first place, as we shall consider it, we are directed in regard to the

#### NEGATIVE SIDE OF LIFE.

In the fifth chapter of Galatians, Paul specifies a number of things as works of the flesh, and says that he who is guilty of any of them "shall not inherit the kingdom of God." These are "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such

like." Now the testimony of the Spirit is, that he who is guilty of any of these things, or things of a like character, unrepented of, can not be a child of God. One's own spirit can testify with all the certainty of consciousness as to whether he is guilty of any of these sins. If he is guilty of one, and continues in it, the gates of heaven are closed against him. While we are required to do much in order to be saved, one sin alone will condemn us. The Spirit testifies that no liar can enter the Holy City. One certainly knows whether or not he is a liar. If it be a matter of consciousness that he is, he stands condemned. He is not a child of God. But if not, he is free upon that point. So far as this goes, he stands approved. So with regard to any other forbidden thing. Thus the negative side of life has to be so guarded as to bring it into conformity on every point with the testimony of the divine Spirit.

Let us now consider the

#### POSITIVE SIDE OF LIFE.

We are told that if we are the children of God, the Spirit of God dwells in us; and that if the Spirit of God dwell in us, the fruits of the Spirit will be manifest in our lives. This is the testimony of the divine Spirit. He then tells us in what these fruits consist. They are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Hence, if one has not these graces in a good degree, he may know that the Spirit dwells not in him; and if it dwell not in him, he is not a child of God.

Peter directs us to "add to our faith virtue; to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance; to tem-

perance, patience; to patience, godliness; to godliness, brotherly kindness; to brotherly kindness, love." He then assures us that if we "do these things, we shall never fall," but shall have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our God. Thus the Spirit testifies in regard to the Christian character, and the conditions of admission into the everlasting kingdom—the kingdom of glory. It can not be other than a matter of consciousness as to whether one is cultivating these graces and building up this kind of a character. If he is not, which, alas! is the case with too many who have started in the way of righteousness, he is without the assurance here given in the testimony of the Spirit. If he is, he stands in the divine favor; and if he so continues till the conflict is over, he can leave the world in full assurance of a home in heaven.

It may be objected that often it is difficult for one to tell with perfect satisfaction how he stands in regard to some of these Christian graces and some of the forbidden things. For instance, he may drink in such a way, be under the influence of intoxicants to such a degree, and with such a length of time intervening, that men will differ in judgment as to whether he is a drunkard; and he is not able to decide the case himself with certainty. So of many other things. This brings up a feature before mentioned, and that should be guarded in this department of the subject with constant care. That is,

#### OUR OWN RESPONSIBILITY FOR DOUBTS.

God has made the way of salvation plain—so plain that "he who runs may read." But while the way is plain, it is narrow. And men do not like narrow ways.

Consequently many stray along the borders. One may be so close on the line—sometimes on one side, and then on the other—that he can not always tell with certainty which side he is on. But this is clearly his own fault. For this he, and not God, is responsible. If he would walk clearly within the road, not venturing upon the borders, he could know at any time that he was in the way that leads to the Holy City.

In opposing the old sectarian idea of doubting, I fear we have gone to an extreme the other way. Many Christians, at times, have their doubts; and they have a good reason for having them. The simple reason is, that they have been engaged in things of doubtful propriety; and to the extent that this is done, to that extent may we have doubts of divine acceptance. Men engage in occupations, like whisky-making, that, to say the least, are doubtful in their character. It is a question as to whether one can serve God acceptably who makes or deals in whisky. This being so, if one engages in it, taking the chances, he may well doubt as to whether he is a child of God. But then the responsibility for the doubt is all his own. He could put it away and engage in that in regard to which there is no doubt. Just so of one who engages in the dance, the theater, the race-track, and such like places of fleshly lusts that war against the soul. So while many, on account of their way of living, have good reason to doubt their being God's children, they have only themselves to blame for the doubt. One may live in such a way, and it is his duty to do it, as to have not a shadow of doubt as to being a child of God, entitled to all the honors and blessings resulting from that sacred relation. By having our own

spirit to correspond in its testimony to that of the Spirit of God, we may at all times

“Read our titles clear  
To mansions in the skies.”

In conclusion we ask you to consider

#### THE GLORIOUS INHERITANCE.

Paul says: “If children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.” Heaven is ours by inheritance. All things in the boundless universe of God are Christ’s. All things were made by Him; and without Him there was nothing made that was made. He was the first-born of the redeemed family—redeemed from the state of sorrow, pain and death that He took upon Himself in order to our redemption. He was heir to all the Father’s estate. Then by virtue of becoming brothers and sisters of His in the royal family, we become joint-heirs to the vast and glorious inheritance. Remember, kind reader, that the Father’s will is made to the children. To them He bequeaths all the riches and honors and glories that He prepared for them before the foundation of the world. He honors them because they have honored His Son. While God so loved the world as to give His Son to die for it, He so loves His Son that He requires that He shall be loved and honored. Jesus said: “If any man serve me, him will my Father honor.” In His divine testimony the Holy Spirit directs men how to serve the Savior by a life devoted to Him. “And as many as are thus led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”

Many are proud of their family relationship, but how



insignificant are all earthly relationships compared to this! How, then, should one feel that has God for his Father, Christ for his brother, and the angels for his companions? Who can feel poor, whose Father possesses all the riches of the universe; whose loving hand is outstretched to His children who love and serve Him, and who suffers not a sparrow to fall without His notice? All we need to feel the assurance of these riches conferred upon us as the Father sees is best, is a more loving service and a stronger faith in His providence.

## SERMON XII.

THE NEW BIRTH: ITS NATURE AND  
NECESSITY.

"Except a man be born anew, he can not see the kingdom of God."—*John* iii: 3.

Two words in the text demand special attention. These are "see" and "kingdom." In what sense did the Savior use the word "see?" Did He mean that unless one is born again he can not, with the natural eye, see the kingdom of God? Evidently not; for the kingdom of God is not a material thing, visible to the natural eye. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." There are things pertaining to the kingdom of God, visible to the natural eye, such as its ordinances and agencies; but nothing that the unconverted man can not see as well as the converted man. Hence the Savior could not have meant that unless one is born again, he can not literally see the kingdom of God. In what sense, then, did He use the word? Evidently in the sense of spiritual perception. This includes realization, experience, etc. In this sense the word is often used: "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." In one sense, every eye shall see Him; but only the pure in heart shall have a blissful realization of His presence. "If a man keep my word, he shall never see death." That is, he shall never experience spiritual death. In this sense we use the word in daily life. We speak of seeing trouble,

seeing pleasure, and the like. We mean that we experience these things. The Savior meant, then, that except one be born again he can not experience, or enjoy, the kingdom of God.

But in what sense did He use the word "kingdom?" In our language we have two words conveying two distinct ideas—"kingdom" and "reign." But in the Greek there is but one word, in its noun form, for both of these ideas. Hence, qualifying words must determine its meaning. Objectively, it is kingdom; subjectively, reign. That refers to external dominion; this, to the principles of government. When the Savior said: "Behold, the kingdom of God is within you," He evidently referred to its principles of government. And so we understand Him here. Then, if this be correct, Jesus expressed this grand and necessary truth—that except one be born again, he can not experience the reign of God over the hearts and lives of men, in the principles of His divine government. We say this is necessarily true, because it is based on an unchangeable law of our being—the principle of congeniality. This principle determines the enjoyment of association both in the church and out; in this world and the next. The presence of God was blissful till Adam sinned, then he hid from His sight. A guilty "conscience makes cowards of us all." The good enjoy the company of the good. The bad seek the society of the bad. The wicked and debased shun the society of the righteous. How, then, could the presence of the Savior be a heaven to them? The idea is absurd. With such, the depths of hell are preferable to the presence of God.

Some years ago, while traveling in a stage-coach, a

preacher had three young men for his companions. They were much elated in spirit. Very soon one drew out a flask and passed it around. On refusing to imbibe, the preacher heard one whisper to another: "I will bet a dollar that man is a preacher, and I would rather be in hell any day than in the company of a preacher." The preacher mentally said: "Young man, unless you mend your ways you will certainly go where you say you would rather be than in the company of a preacher; but the trouble is, you will not get rid of all the preachers when you get there." The enjoyment of these young men went down about ninety degrees for the rest of the trip. Can we enjoy the kingdom of God when we can not enjoy the company of those who are trying to serve Him? It is impossible. Can we expect to enjoy the holy associations of heaven, when we do not enjoy those of the Church?

The kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom. Its associations, its enjoyments, its aspirations, its hopes, its promises—all are spiritual. Hence one must himself become spiritual before he can enjoy its blessings and privileges. The reason so many enjoy not the things of the kingdom is, they have not the spirituality of the kingdom. If we do not enjoy religion, it is simply because we have none to enjoy. One enjoys the worship, the work, and the sacrifices of the Church. Another finds no pleasure in these things. Why? Simply because the one is converted and the other is not. It is impossible that unregenerate men can enjoy the things of God, in this world or the world to come. The unregenerate in the churches will live and die strangers to the experimental enjoy-

ment of the reign of God in the hearts of converted men. God can not make a kingdom of spiritual enjoyment, here or hereafter, for unregenerate and sin-loving men. Hence Universalism is absurd.

Many seem to think that because they have "joined the church," God should make them happy. Hence they are disposed to blame religion, rather than themselves, for the want of it. God has made no such promise. Happiness is not a gift to be arbitrarily bestowed. It is a consequence. God has graciously provided the means which produce it. If we use them, we shall be happy; if we neglect them, we shall not. Every child of God has his spiritual growth and enjoyment in his own hands. Faithfulness to Christ brings its own reward.

Much of the indifference and failure in the kingdom of God, is due to the want of a deep conviction of sin. A light estimate of sin is the curse of the age. A shallow conviction of sin is paralyzing the churches of God. Preachers should be very careful at this point. It is easy to present the plan of salvation, and to defend it against all opposition, but to make men realize the enormity of their sins, and their consequent dependence on Christ, is quite a different matter. We should labor for deep conviction of sin. People should be deeply impressed with the self-denial of the Christian life, before they confess Christ. We should be more concerned about converting than baptizing people. The worst place for unconverted men is in the church; and the worst thing in the church is unconverted men.

## THE INWARD AND OUTWARD MAN.

When Jesus said a man must be born again, there arose a difficulty in the mind of Nicodemus. He said: "How can a man be born when he is old?" His trouble was due to the fact that he had in mind the wrong man. Paul makes a clear distinction between what he calls the inward and the outward man: "Though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day." (2 Cor. iv: 16.) "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see a different law in my members [the outward man], warring against the law of my mind." (Rom. vii: 22.) These Scriptures, and many others, recognize an inward, immortal man, in contradistinction to an outward, mortal man. Nicodemus had his mind on the "outward man." Jesus spoke solely of the "inward man." Hence, Nicodemus had reference to a birth of flesh; Jesus, to a birth of spirit. Consequently, Jesus said: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." That is, it is the spirit of man, not his body, that is born again. The inward man, not the outward, is the subject of the new birth. The "man" that is born again, is born of the Spirit. The outward man, or body, is not born of the Spirit. Hence, the outward man, or body, is not contemplated in the new birth. In conversion the spirit is regenerated; the flesh is not. The body will never be regenerated, till regenerated from the grave. The fact that the spirit is regenerated and the flesh is not, is the cause of the warfare between the two from conversion till death. Were they both regenerated, there would be no conflict.

Before conversion the flesh controls the spirit; after conversion the spirit must control the flesh. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other." Hence, even Paul says: "I labor to keep my body under." So long as the spirit controls the flesh, one is on the Lord's side; but when he permits the flesh to again control the spirit, he has fallen from his first love.

With the same thought of the inward man in mind, Jesus continues: "Marvel not that I said unto thee Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Whether we render *πνεῦμα* wind or Spirit in this passage, affects not the fact illustrated; though we think "Spirit" is overwhelmingly demanded as a translation. Observe that Jesus compares *things*, not *processes*. He speaks of the man that is born again, not of the manner of his birth. The one that is born again is compared to the wind, or to the Spirit of God. The point of comparison is the *invisibility* of the two things. The inward man, the man born again, is as invisible as the Spirit of God, or as the wind that blows. The outward man, that Nicodemus had in mind, is the man you see. The inward man, that Jesus had in mind, is the man you do not see. That is visible and mortal; this is invisible and immortal.

As a teacher in Israel, Nicodemus should have known that the Messiah's kingdom, when established, was to be a spiritual kingdom. This his Bible clearly taught. The prevailing misconceptions of the Jews concerning



the nature of this kingdom, were all due to a misapplication of Bible teaching. For this their teachers were responsible. Since Messiah's kingdom was to be a spiritual kingdom, when Jesus said that one must be born again in order to enter it, Nicodemus should have known that He had reference to a birth of Spirit, not of flesh. Hence the gentle rebuke.

#### ELEMENTS OF THE NEW BIRTH.

Having traced that line of thought through, we must now return and notice another feature of the new birth.

In the third verse, Jesus simply expresses the necessity of the new birth. He does not even intimate that of which it consists. Had He said no more, we should have known that the new birth is a necessity, without ever knowing what it is. In the fifth verse, He tells us of what it consists. The general statement of the third verse is explained by the specific statement of the fifth. But, strange to say, very many reverse this fundamental principle of interpretation, and try to explain the component parts of the new birth by a passage that says not one word about them.

The new birth is a birth of water and of Spirit. The birth is one; the agencies are two. What, then, is the office of each as an agent in the new birth? We shall consider them separately.

#### THE SPIRIT'S AGENCY.

The work effected by the Holy Spirit in the new birth is conversion. The whole process of conversion results from the influence of the Spirit. Our faith, repentance, change of heart, hatred of sin, love of

God, turning to God in obedience—all are produced by the Spirit of the living God. The process of regeneration is begun, carried on, and consummated, by the Holy Spirit. Hence, to be born again is to be born from above, as the Greek word *ἀνωθεν*, here translated “again,” implies. But how does the Spirit accomplish this work? Let the Savior himself answer.

On the night of the betrayal, Jesus said to His disciples: “It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you.” (John xvi: 7.) The Comforter here promised is the Holy Spirit, who was to be sent as the Advocate of Jesus. He was to advocate the claims of Jesus to the Messiahship. In order to this grand consummation of the scheme of redemption, it is important to know *what* he was to do, and *how* he was to do it. We inquire, first, as to what He was to do for the Apostles; and, second, as to what He was to do for the world.

The Holy Spirit, as the Advocate of Jesus, was to do three distinct things for the Apostles: (1.) He was to teach them all things, and bring to their remembrance all that Jesus had taught them: “But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you.” (John xiv: 26.) (2.) He was to guide them into all the truth: “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth.” (John xvi: 13.) (3.) He was to reveal to them things to come: “And he shall declare unto you the things that are to come.” (John xvi: 13.) This was to be done by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: “But

when they deliver you up, be not anxious what or how ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." (Matt. x: 19, 20.) Thus were the Apostles qualified to advocate the claims of Jesus, and, as His ambassadors, to speak in His stead. They spake as the Spirit gave them utterance. The Spirit spake not from himself, but what He heard from the throne of the Messiah, that He spake: "For he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak. . . . He shall glorify me; for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you." (John xvi: 13, 14.) Hence, what the Apostles spoke by the Holy Spirit was only a repetition of that emanating from the throne of the coronated Christ. Thus the Savior intimates (Matt. xviii: 18) that the binding and loosing were first done in heaven, and then re-enacted on earth. This is what the Holy Spirit did for the Apostles, and how He did it.

But what was the Holy Spirit, as the Advocate of Christ, to do for the world? He was to convince the world of sin, of the righteousness of Christ, and of judgment by Him at the last day: "And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged." (John xvi: 8-11.) The Advocate of Christ convinced men of His righteousness by convincing them that God raised Him from the dead. God would not have raised an impostor. By proving that Jesus

had been raised and glorified, the Spirit proved that He had conquered the prince of this world, held dominion over it, and would henceforth judge it in righteousness. In convincing them of these facts, He convicted them of the sin of all sins—not believing on Jesus as the Christ. Thus were the three thousand convicted on the day of Pentecost ; and so of all the rest.

There has been much controversy in the religious world as to *how* the Holy Spirit does His work as an agent in regeneration. Much of this controversy is due to a misconception as to *what* He does. Many attribute a cleansing or purifying efficacy to the Spirit ; and their entire theology, as touching His operations, is framed with reference to this idea. Hence the unconscious babe and the penitent sinner, in ways mysterious, and by influences incomprehensible, are alike cleansed from defilement by the Spirit of God. This is strange, when the idea of cleansing is never once attributed to the Holy Spirit in the entire Book of God. It is never intimated that He cleanses any body from any thing. The blood of Christ is the source of all cleansing : “The blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” (I. John i: 7.) The idea of cleansing, in both Testaments, in type and in substance, is ever connected with the blood of Christ : “For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh ; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God ?” (Heb. ix: 13, 14.) “And according to the law, I

may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission." (Heb. ix: 22.) Other things to which cleansing is attributed are effectual to this end only as they are agencies to bring us to the "fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins." But it is claimed that the "cleansing" efficacy of the Holy Spirit is a direct impartation. Thus many attribute to the Holy Spirit what the Holy Spirit attributes to the blood of Christ. An unscriptural theory as to what the Spirit does, begets an equally unscriptural theory as to how He does it. The Holy Spirit convicts men of sin; the blood of Christ cleanses them from it. This is the divine order.

But how does the Advocate of Jesus convince the world of sin? By testimony. This is the only way that men can be intelligently convinced of anything: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me; and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." (John xv: 26, 27.) But how is the Spirit to testify? By speaking: "He shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak." (John xvi: 13.) But how is He to speak? Shall He speak to the world in dreams and visions? by supernatural manifestations? or by the "still, small voice" of personal revelation? No. The whole volume of inspiration thunders, No! The Spirit speaks through the Apostles: "But when they deliver you up, be not anxious how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is

not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." (Matt. x: 19, 20.) So it is clearly stated that the Holy Spirit was to convict the world of sin; He was to do it by testimony; He was to testify by speaking, and He was to speak through the Apostles. Thus through Apostolic teaching does the Spirit of God convict men of sin. One can not know that he is a sinner, and that Christ is his Savior, but by this testimony of the Spirit. We can know nothing of salvation or its conditions, except what the Spirit has thus revealed. Consequently when one decides to seek salvation through Christ, however influenced by providential circumstances, and however long since he may have read a chapter or heard a sermon, his knowledge of the thing sought and the necessity of seeking it are wholly due to the testimony of God's Spirit through the truth. But for this, he could have no desire to seek, nor purpose in seeking. Hence every conversion necessarily results from the testimony of the Spirit. Our faith is produced by the divine Spirit: "For how can we believe in him of whom we have not heard?" and how can we hear except as the Spirit has spoken? Every change in the whole process of conversion and obedience to God results from the same divine source. Hence the result of the Spirit's agency in the new birth is conversion.

#### THE WATER'S AGENCY.

But what connection has water with the new birth? It is unnecessary to notice the many efforts of modern partisans, in defiance of the simplest rules of interpretation and common sense, to make it appear that "water" here does not mean water. To dispose of the matter briefly, I will simply state that "born of

water," as a part of the new birth, means Christian baptism. For this I shall give but three reasons.

1. It is a universally admitted principle of interpretation, that words must be taken in their ordinary meaning unless the context or the nature of the case forbids it. Here there is not only nothing forbidding the usual meaning of the word water; but every effort to force upon it some other meaning makes the veriest nonsense.

2. Water has no connection with the religion of Christ, as an essential element, except in Christian baptism. Here water is connected with the religion of Christ as an essential element. Therefore water here means Christian baptism.

3. The great Bible scholars and expositors in all the ages of the Church, have regarded the water of the new birth as Christian baptism. Among these are such names as Alford, Bengel, Stuart, Wall, Bloomfield, Barnes, Wesley, and Summers. Besides, the great bodies of "learned divines" that produced the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, the Episcopal Prayer-Book, the Methodist Discipline, and other important Protestant creeds, have put themselves on record to the effect that "born of water" refers to water baptism. We are not disposed to dispute the scholarship of the world on this question. For these three reasons, to say nothing of others, we feel compelled to accept the water of the new birth as Christian baptism.

Since the Spirit's work in the new birth is conversion, and the water refers to baptism, the Savior simply said, in other words, that except one be converted and baptized, he can not enter into the kingdom of God. Conversion alone will not take him in. Baptism



alone will not take him in. It requires the *two*, united in *one birth*, to enter the kingdom.

Perhaps it would be well to remark here that the expression, "kingdom of God," does not mean heaven. It means the Church, or kingdom of God on the earth. We enter the everlasting kingdom by a faithful continuance in well-doing.

The birth of water and of Spirit is one birth. One is not born of the Spirit and then of the water, nor of the water and then of the Spirit. He is born of both at one and the same time. Nor is one part of the man born of the Spirit, and another part of the water. That which is born of the one is born of the other. The same "man" is born of both water and Spirit. Nothing can be born of the water that is not at the same time born of the Spirit. Apart from that of the Spirit there is no birth of the water. But "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Therefore, that which is born of the water is spirit. That which is born of the Spirit of God is the spirit of man, not his body. Therefore, that which is born of the water is the spirit of man, not his body. Sometimes we hear the crude idea expressed that, in conversion the spirit is born of the Spirit, and in baptism the body is born of the water; and thus the whole man is born again. But this can not be. The body of the man is not born of the Spirit; and that which is not born of the Spirit is not born of the water. In the new birth there is no birth of flesh. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." But in the new birth there is nothing born of the flesh; hence no flesh is born. But man's flesh is his body; hence in the new birth his body is not born. We grant that the words "flesh" and "body"

are not always synonymous in the New Testament; but in this case the Savior uses the word flesh in the sense of body. Hence, though the body be controlled by the spirit, and brought in subjection to the divine will, and its members consecrated to the divine service, it can no more be a subject of the new birth than is one's gold which he dedicates to the service of God. The body, however consecrated to God's service, is not born of the Spirit; and not being born of the Spirit, it is not born of the water. From all of which it follows, with the certainty of mathematics, that the "inward man," not the "outward," is the subject of the new birth in its *entirety*.

We have seen that the body of man is not born of the water. But the birth of water is scriptural baptism. Therefore, the body of man is not scripturally baptized. This follows with mathematical certainty if the birth of water exhausts the meaning of baptism. Can any thing be scripturally baptized that is not born of water? If so, the body may be scripturally baptized. If not, it can not be. I have carefully weighed all the objections that have been presented against this position, and have asked a number of our best critics to show a flaw in the reasoning, if any exists; and yet I am compelled to leave it as I first expressed it in the "*Disciple of Christ*," with the above provision as to the birth of water exhausting the meaning of baptism.

In the classic sense of the word, any thing is baptized that is immersed. Immersion alone is classic baptism. But immersion alone is not Christian baptism. Christian baptism demands faith and repentance in the thing baptized. Faith and repentance can not be predicated of the body. Hence the body is

not a subject of Christian baptism. The body is not born of the Spirit; not being born of the Spirit, it is not born of the water; and not being born of the water, it is not scripturally baptized, except on the above proviso.

Some years ago, in a public discussion, a gentleman used the following illustration to show that there may be immersion without scriptural baptism. He took a glass of water and, holding a nickel over it, said: "Now, I drop this nickel into the water. Every one says it is immersed; but no one will say it is scripturally baptized. Here, then, is a clear case of immersion, but no scriptural baptism. Therefore, immersion only is not scriptural baptism." Of course we conceded every word of it. No one claims that immersion only is Christian baptism. "But," said I, "let us try the illustration a little further. I drop a nickel into the glass of water. You all say it is immersed; but none of you say it is scripturally baptized. I then lay it on the pulpit and pour a little water on it, and you all say it is poured; but none of you say it is scripturally baptized. I then sprinkle a little water on it, and you all say it is sprinkled; but none of you say it is scripturally baptized. So we have here a clear case of immersion, of pouring, and of sprinkling, and yet no scriptural baptism. Do what you will to the nickel, you can not scripturally baptize it. Why? There is something wrong about the nickel. It has no faith, no repentance, and no love of God. Hence it can not be scripturally baptized. But, my dear brother, it has just as much of these as any infant you ever tried to baptize. Hence the reason you can not scripturally baptize a nickel, is the reason you can not scripturally baptize a baby."

Why is the scriptural baptism of an infant as impossible as that of a stone? Because it is as destitute as a stone of faith and repentance. But an infant has as much faith and repentance as a man's body has. Hence scriptural baptism can no more apply to a man's body than it can to an infant. A man's body is as destitute of the scriptural prerequisites of baptism as the clothing he has on. Hence scriptural baptism can no more apply to his immersed body than to his immersed clothing.

It is the "inward man," the immortal man, that believes, repents, turns to God, wills to serve Him, is crucified with Christ, is buried with Him, and rises to walk with Him in newness of life. Being thus changed by the Spirit of God, the inward man assumes the mastery over the body, and brings it into subjection to the divine will. The success of the Christian life depends on the regenerated spirit holding the mastery over the unregenerated body. As we strengthen the spirit we weaken the flesh; and as we pamper the flesh we dwarf the spirit. Hence, while the outward man perishes, the inward man grows stronger day by day.

#### BAPTISM INWARD AND SPIRITUAL.

Much has been said about baptism as an "outward ordinance," a "fleshly ordinance," a "bodily ordinance," etc. These expressions are born of a false idea of its nature. They are not found in the Bible, from the simple fact that the idea is not there. Baptism is no more "outward" than are faith and repentance. The inward man believes, and the inward man is baptized. The outward man does neither.

Hence to speak of baptism as an external, fleshly ordinance, is to lose sight of its internal, spiritual nature.

It is often argued that the new birth is from above, as the word *ἀνωθεν* implies, and therefore entirely spiritual. This we grant. Every change in the whole process is produced by the Spirit of God, and is, therefore, from above and spiritual. How, then, can baptism be a part? Is it of God, or of men? The Savior asked this question, but got no answer. Baptism as much results from the Spirit as do faith and repentance. Hence it is equally from above, and equally spiritual.

The new birth is a transition process from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God. This is the analogy in the figure—a passage from one state to another. It is evident that God does not pardon one while in the kingdom of Satan. It is equally evident that one can not get into the kingdom of God without pardon. He must, therefore, be pardoned at the conclusion of the transition from the one to the other. But the concluding act of this process is baptism. Hence we are pardoned at the time of baptism.

The new birth is no respecter of persons. There is no royal road to the kingdom of God. Kings and beggars alike must be born again. For this there is no substitute. Our deeds of benevolence and mercy can avail us nothing; we must be born again. Our boastful morality and æsthetic culture go for naught; except we are born again we can not enter the kingdom of God. Our wealth may control the commerce of the world, but it can not buy a place in God's

favor; we must be born again. The kingdoms of this world may bestow upon us their chief positions, and crown us with tokens of their adoration; but unless we are born again we can find no place in the kingdom of God.

## SERMON XIII.

## THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH.

“Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.”—*Rom.* xvi: 25, 26.

PAUL is the most exhaustive inspired writer on justification by faith. And his Epistle to the Romans is his most elaborate treatise on that subject. Yet the Epistle begins and ends with the statements, that he was called to an apostleship, and that the Gospel was preached to all nations, “for the *obedience of faith*.” Speaking of Christ, in chap. i: 5, he says: “By whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name.” And in the text he says, that the Gospel is preached, and the mystery of the past ages revealed to all nations, “for the obedience of faith.” Faith, and the obedience of faith, are not the same. The obedience of faith is the obedience which faith produces; which results from, or springs out of faith. Paul asserts that the Gospel is to be preached in order to obedience, stating the kind of obedience—the obedience produced by faith. It is important to observe the significance of this statement.

## TWO KINDS OF OBEDIENCE.

There are two distinct kinds of obedience in the world. One is the obedience of divine faith; the



other, of human reason. One is of God; the other, of men. The same acts in different men result from different causes. The principle that influences men to act, is the thing to be considered. The principle of faith, and that of human reason, lead to obedience in two distinct classes of acts. The moral commandments, such as the decalogue, are observed to a greater or less extent even by those who have no faith in Christ. Such obedience does not necessarily result from faith; hence obedience to this class of commandments is no test of one's faith in Christ. As fine a specimen of morality as I ever knew; a man whose every-day life would be a model for Christians to imitate; a man who prayed in his family daily, did not believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. His honesty, his integrity, his virtue, his kindness, his chaste conversation, his freedom from blasphemy, in a word, his high order of a moral and upright life, was in no sense the outgrowth of faith. So all these things are no proof of one's faith. They can testify only in a negative sense. One must have them in order to be a Christian; but he may have them and yet not be a Christian. So this kind of obedience does not save one. It results from one's judgment as to what would be profitable. He must see a reason for it apart from God's requirement, and his obedience is determined by his judgment, and this by his reason. It is philosophy, not faith.

But the Gospel, says Paul, is to be preached in order to a different kind of obedience—a kind that results from faith, and from nothing else. The reason one obeys in this class of things, is because Christ has commanded him, and his faith in Christ leads him

to do whatever He directs. This kind of obedience is a test of one's faith. If he has faith he obeys; if not, he does not. A and B are both honest, virtuous, kind to their families, truthful, moral, upright, sober, and so on through the entire chapter of moral virtues. Yet A is a believer in Jesus and B is not. While one has faith and the other has not, they are alike obedient in that class of things. Hence one can not tell whether faith in Christ or some other consideration led them to obedience. But you also see A demand baptism at the hands of some godly man; and you see him sit at the Lord's Table with the Lord's people on the Lord's day. You see him engaged with delight in the worship of God through Christ, as opportunity affords. You see B do none of these things. Here are certain acts of obedience which are a joy to one, but rejected by the other. Why? Because they are acts of "the obedience of faith;" and one has faith to produce them, while the other has not. They result only from faith, when done in sincerity; hence if one has not faith sufficiently strong to move him to action, he does none of these.

In every age of the world God has seen fit to justify men on the principle of faith. Justification by faith is a Bible doctrine from side to side. In order to this, men's faith must be tested. Very few men have no faith at all. A certain amount of faith is necessary to salvation. Hence God measures every one's faith. If it comes up to the amount required, he is justified. If not, his faith is deficient. To this end God has been careful in every age to select such acts of obedience as only faith would produce. He has selected such things as have nothing in them to commend them

to man's acceptance, except the command of God. Being destitute of every other consideration that would prompt to obedience, they become tests of faith; for if one has faith he will do them because God commands him to; and if he has not, he will not. We have a fine illustration of this at the very beginning. God forbade Adam's eating the fruit of a certain tree. The fruit was enticing. Had it been repulsive, he might have refrained through his dislike of it, without any reference to the divine prohibition. Suppose that instead of prohibiting this fruit, God should have forbidden Adam to lay violent hands on his wife. He might have kept the command a thousand years, and the angel Gabriel could never have told whether he did it through love for God or love for his wife! It would, therefore, have been no test of his faith.

It is well to get before our minds, in the first place, the real point of difference between the Disciples and the denominations generally, on the question of justification. There has been much misunderstanding just here, and it has resulted in much prejudice. Let us, then, get at the real heart of it.

#### POINTS OF AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT.

There is no disagreement as to the *grounds* of justification. All hold that the ground of our justification, the meritorious procuring cause, is the *blood of Christ*. There is no difference as to the *principle* of justification. All hold that the principle resulting in our justification, is *faith*. That on which we differ is simply as to *when* we are, on the merits of the blood of Christ, and on the principle of faith, justified, or freed from the guilt of sin? The denominations hold

that we are pardoned or justified by faith so soon as we believe; while we hold that we are justified by faith when our faith finds expression in obedience. The difference involves neither the atonement nor faith. The cause of justification is not an issue. The issue is simply a point of time—the time when the assurance of remission and divine acceptance is given. Thus it is deprived of all the ugliness with which the denominational world have delighted to paint it.

God has had an overt act of obedience of the positive character which tests faith, “the obedience of faith,” ever ready, in every dispensation, to meet the penitent sinner’s faith, and test its strength and its value. When his faith leads to this obedience, it performs its functions, and accomplishes that for which it was designed. In this it brings remission or justification. It is not obedience that procures remission, but faith expressed in obedience. Not by obedience, as a procuring cause, but in it, God has given assurance of the divine blessing in every age of the world. That this is true, we have but to observe His dealings with the race through the entire scheme of redemption. It is clearly taught by examples in all dispensations. To illustrate the principle, we invite attention to a number of

#### DIVINE EXAMPLES.

Paul says that “by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead, yet speaketh.”

This is the first recorded case of worship. It was a worship of faith. God had directed it in all its

parts. Abel had as much faith before he offered his lamb as he had afterwards. He had faith to do just what God directed, and that is practically all that one can ever have. Beyond that faith can not go. This is the end for which it was appointed. When it accomplishes this purpose, it has fulfilled its mission, and can do no more. Abel had faith to obtain a lamb, build his altar, prepare his sacrifice and offer it as God directed. But all this faith, a faith as practically perfect as man can have, brought no testimony from God of his righteousness, or justification, *till the offering was made*. When the offering was made; when his faith found expression in obedience, God testified of his gifts—not of his faith, but of his *gifts*. He was justified by faith, but God testified of his *gifts*. Why? His gifts were an exponent of his faith. The divine testimony, therefore, was in regard to them. Here was an act of obedience. Of what kind? “The obedience of faith.” Faith produced it. It had nothing to commend it to Abel’s consideration apart from the divine command. When his faith was weighed in the balances and found sufficient for the test, God gave him assurance of His approval. Thus the question as to when the blessing was obtained in that case is clearly settled. It was *in* “the obedience of faith;” not before it. And not one case in all the Book of God can be found to the contrary.

In noting the grand heroes of faith, and their achievements, Paul says that Noah built the ark by faith. How was this done? The “Great Eastern,” the largest ship afloat, is not equal to the ark. How could a man, with only men to assist him as workmen, build such a vessel by faith? With the sectarian idea

of faith, how long would it take the world to build the ark? Did Noah sit down and "exercise faith in God," whatever that may mean, till the ark stood forth completed by some mysterious process? Was it done by some mental, moral or spiritual process *unexpressed in acts that God directed*? The whole evangelical world are compelled to give an emphatic *no*. Then it was not done by faith as the sectarian world counts faith. Their idea of faith is "faith only." That is, as now perverted from its use by Luther, Wesley, and the framers of the Discipline, faith apart from the obedience which God requires of the faithful. Noah built the ark by faith, but not by "faith only." It was done by *hard work*, and a great deal of it; yet the single word *faith* covers the whole ground. When Noah was years of hard work in building the ark, how could Paul say it was done by faith, instead of *work*? Simply because faith was the *principle* which moved him to action. Faith is a principle of action, and whatever is produced by that principle is of faith. Whatever is done as God directs, and *because He directs it*, is done by faith. Noah's faith was strong enough to induce him to build the ark as directed. He was not induced by any other consideration. Hence his work was a work of faith. The faith of Noah, the kind that Paul commends to the world, the kind that distinguished Abraham, includes all the acts of obedience growing out of it, that God has directed. This is the faith of the Bible; the faith that saves the soul.

Hence to contend that we are "justified by faith only," because we are justified by faith, is to misconceive the clear historical Bible teaching concerning the

nature of faith, and to construct a false theory on the misconception.

Noah believed all that God said, and did just as He directed. He had no disposition to alter or amend God's plan. This is the faith with which God is ever well pleased. Hence, when Noah's faith found expression in obedience, and God saw his work, a work of faith, he obtained the divine blessing, and "became heir of the righteousness which is of faith."

Let us next consider the case of Abraham, "the father of the faithful." He is pre-eminently a model of faith. And of all the acts of his grand life of faith, the most noted is the offering of Isaac. Paul says: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called." This was a severe test of Abraham's faith. It would have been a test unprecedented, had it been simply a child that he was directed to offer. It would have required great faith to stagger not at the obedience of such a command. But this was not the real test of his faith. God had promised him that the posterity of Isaac should be as the sands upon the sea-shore for multitude. And now he is told to offer him in sacrifice; to burn his body to ashes. If he obeyed God's command, how could God fulfill His promise? It required a faith that falters at nothing to be assured that He would do it. Abraham's faith was that God would do it. His opinion was that he would do it by raising Isaac from the dead. (Heb. xi: 19.) He was wrong in his opinion, but his faith was simply sublime. His willingness to take the life of his child, trusting that God, in some way, would



do all that He had promised concerning the posterity of his son, shows the wonderful strength of his faith before the offering was made. But when did this faith bring the assurance of justification? Was it when he left his beloved Sarah to take his journey in the wilderness? Was it when he had come to the holy mount? Was it when he had built the altar and bound on it the treasured sacrifice? Not yet. His faith was just as strong as faith can be, but it brought not yet the blessing. It was as willing and trusting as faith ever was, but the act which God had selected to test it was yet unperformed. Not until the knife was raised that the next instant would have been buried in the bosom of his boy, did God arrest his hand and say: "Hold! It is enough!" Then God gave him assurance that he was justified. He had long been living in favor with God, hence this was not the first time he had obtained justification; but the *principle* is the same in all ages and for all classes—"the obedience of faith." When Abraham had gone just as far in the act as God could permit, He said: "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." Mark the language of God, as personated by the angel: "*Now I know that thou fearest me, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me.*" God bases His knowledge of Abraham's reverential fear, in the *act* which was the test of faith. Again, God assures Abraham of His divine favor because of the act which tested his faith, saying: "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast *done this thing* . . . that in blessing I will bless thee, and

in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore." Nothing could be more explicit than this. The grandest deed of faith of the grandest man of faith, brings the divine blessing when it is accomplished as God directs, to the fullest extent permissible. This was the obedience of faith—the kind of obedience for which the Gospel is to be preached to all the nations to produce.

The same Apostle, who tells us more about justification by faith than all other inspired writers, says that, "by faith the children of Israel passed through the Red Sea as by dry land." It is easy to see how this was done. They did not transport themselves over by any mental process; any "exercise of faith" of this character. On the contrary, God prepared the way and commanded them to "go forward." They had faith to do just what He directed. It looked like a hazardous business. But they believed that the God of their fathers who had wrought such miracles in Egypt, would hold the waters apart till they had passed through. They, therefore, faltered not, but went forward as directed, and they sang the song of deliverance on the other shore. They passed through the Red Sea by an act of obedience to God. Yet Paul says they did it by faith. Hence a thing done as God directs, is done by faith. We are saved by faith just as they crossed the sea by faith. To say, therefore, that this is by faith only, that is, faith apart from the obedience produced by it, is to speak contrary to every example in God's Word, from side to side. The Israelites were delivered from Egyptian bondage when they obeyed God by faith; in the "obedience of

faith;” and we are delivered from our past bondage to sin, and the kingdom of Satan, when we do likewise.

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were compassed about seven days.” This is a striking example of the principle of faith as it operates to the accomplishment of any great end, even the salvation of men. Let us see how this wonderful work was done by faith.

The hosts of Israel, under Joshua, were encamped near the old city of Jericho. God ordered them to form in a certain order, and march around the city once a day for seven days; and on the seventh day they were to go around seven times. Then they were to turn their faces to the wall, lift their voices in a grand shout to God, blow a loud blast on their rams’ horns, and the walls would fall.

What possible connection was there here between the means employed and the end to be accomplished? None whatever. There could be nothing to induce one to do as here directed, except the simple fact that it was directed. Hence obedience here must be the obedience of faith. If faith does not produce it, it will not be produced. For it is destitute of any other consideration commending it. This is the character of all acts of obedience of that class; because only such can be tests of faith. It is important to observe that the promises of salvation stand connected *exclusively* with this class of acts of obedience. The very kind that the world talks about being non-essential, because they can not see any philosophical reason for their observance, is the kind, and the only kind, with which, as conditions, God connects the promise of salvation;

for the reason that salvation is by faith, and these only are tests of faith. The reason the world assigns for not obeying such commands, is the very reason why they should be obeyed. If they could see a reason in them, and a necessity of obeying them on that account, then they would not be tests of faith. Faith would not be the cause of the obedience. Hence it would be worthless.

The Israelites formed in order as God directed and marched around the city once, and returned to camp. This they did once each day for seven days. On the seventh day they went around seven times. And when they had accomplished the seventh round the walls stood as firm as they were before the siege began. No impression had been made. Those within doubtless derided them for their generalship. They were considered brainless fanatics to expect any results from that unheard-of kind of warfare. Why did the walls stand firm after the Israelites had gone around seven times? Simply because the instructions were not yet completely fulfilled. Had the siege stopped here, nothing would have been accomplished. But they did not stop. They were going by faith, hence they halted not till the last item commanded had been complied with. So they now turned their faces to the wall, lifted their voices in a shout of victory, and gave a blast on their trumpets, and *the walls of Jericho fell flat to the earth,* and every man marched up straight before him and possessed the city! Thus were the walls of Jericho destroyed by faith. What kind of faith? A kind that sits still trusting in God without doing what He directs? No. Such faith James says is dead, being alone. That is, not being accompanied

by obedience springing out of it. The faith by which the walls of Jericho fell down, was a faith that takes God at His word and does as He directs—"the obedience of faith."

Under the Jewish law, when one sinned he brought a lamb, of the first year, without spot or blemish, to the priest. The priest performed the ceremony prescribed in the law, and offered the lamb as a sin offering. He thus made an atonement for the sinner. This offering was made by faith. If the man had faith and repentance he made the offering; if not, he did not. But only when his faith led to the offering and the offering was complete, did he obtain remission. "And when the offering is made, then shall his sin be forgiven," is the language of the law. Here was "the obedience of faith," and it typified the atonement of Christ, and our pardon procured thereby.

We find the same principle holding through the New Testament, under the new covenant. As a feature of this, let us consider the institution of prayer. Prayer is graciously provided as a means or condition of remission of sins to God's children. Prayer is an act of obedience. God has directed it. The child of God confesses his sins and asks God to forgive him. This is the result of faith. The man of faith prays; the man without faith does not. While prayer is a gracious privilege, it is also an act of obedience to God—"the obedience of faith." Hence the blessing is promised *when* the obedience is rendered. We are forgiven *when* we pray, not before. We have the same faith before as after; but our faith does not bring

the blessing of remission till it finds expression in obedience.

This question is often asked: "If we are pardoned when baptized, what would become of one, should he be killed on his way to the water to be baptized?" To show the folly of such a question, we ask, what would become of a child of God who had sinned, and was killed while on his way to the closet to confess his sin and pray for pardon? Answer our question, and we will answer yours. And this is a matter to which Christians are exposed all through life. Such things God keeps in His own councils.

In the light of all these examples, it is easy to see the philosophy of remission of sins in baptism at the time of baptism. Baptism is an act of obedience. It is produced by faith. It is "the obedience of faith." It is a test of the sinner's faith. It stands to him just where Abel's offering stood to him, where the offering of Isaac stood to Abraham, where prayer stands to the Christian—an overt act of obedience to God growing out of his faith, and testing its strength, as to whether it will lead one to do what God directs, void of all other considerations. We are pardoned when baptized, not because of any virtue in baptism as such, but because God has so ordered. We are justified by faith, and our faith is measured by this act of obedience, that meets us at the threshold of the kingdom of God, and the government of Christ. The whole Christian life is a life of obedience to God, and it is an obedience produced by our faith. The stronger our faith, the more full and complete our obedience. We thus walk by faith, fight the good fight of faith, till we lay hold on eternal life.

In every age of the world obedience has been the test of man's loyalty to God. God has never accepted any thing else as a substitute. "Behold obedience is better than sacrifice." Christ is "the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him." "Not every one that says unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." "Every one therefore who heareth these words of mine, and *doeth them*, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock . . . And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand." The difference here is not in hearing nor believing, but in *doing* the commandments of the Son of God. The difference between *doing* and *not doing* what Christ directs, is in the Savior's own estimation, the difference between a wise man and a fool. It matters not what one's theology may be, what his creed may be, what his boastful faith may be ; if he does not obey the commands of the Son of God, he is the veriest simpleton in the estimation of high heaven. Not in opinion, not in theories, not in speculation, not in untested faith, but in *obedience to God*, is the way of salvation so plain that he who runs may read ; that the simpleton need not err therein.

God demands a life of holy service ; of consecration to His cause ; of self-denial ; of singleness of heart ; and this is a life of obedience produced by faith in the Son of God. Hence Paul sublimely says : "I am crucified with Christ ; nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ; and the life which I now live



in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." This is the exalted, consecrated life of a devoted child of God; a life controlled by faith in Christ; a life of obedience such as that for which the Gospel is to be preached to all the nations—"the obedience of faith."

## SERMON XIV.

## THE STATE OF THE RIGHTEOUS DEAD.

"Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to naught him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their life time subject to bondage."—*Heb. ii: 14, 15.*

In the New Testament there are two distinct classes of texts referring to the state of the righteous dead. These appear to be antagonistic. No theory can be correct that does not harmonize them. No theory that I have yet seen, except the one here presented, does this. Hence I can accept none. If that which I advance does not do it, it likewise will be unworthy of acceptance.

Previous to the death of Jesus there are several allusions to what is called the intermediate state. Hades expressed the state of the dead, without regard to their condition. At death the good and the bad alike went into hades. The rich man lifted up his eyes in hades, being in torment. Christ was in hades while His body was in the grave. David, referring to him, as quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost, said: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hades, neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption." Hades included both paradise and Tartarus. These were its departments. That was the abode of the righteous; this of the wicked. To this the rebellious angels were cast down, to await the final judgment of the last day. (2 Peter ii: 4.) Lazarus was carried by the angels to

Abraham's bosom. This was but a Jewish expression for paradise. Jesus said to the penitent thief: "this day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Jesus, Lazarus and the thief, then, all went to paradise at death. But Jesus and the rich man went to hades. The place of the rich man was a place of torment; paradise, where Jesus went, was a place of "comfort."<sup>b</sup> It follows, therefore, that both of these places were in hades. Since these representatives of the two classes—the righteous and the unrighteous—went to these distinct departments of hades, it follows that all the race went to the same places.

Christ did not go to the Father while His body was in the grave. On the day of the resurrection He said to Mary: "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father." Paradise, at that time, then, as we shall hereafter see, was not the dwelling place of the Most High.

From all of these statements it follows conclusively that previous to the ascension and coronation of Jesus, there was an intermediate state of the righteous dead called paradise, but which was not heaven itself, the holy habitation of God. Here the souls of the righteous abode in "comfort" awaiting the dedication of heaven by the blood of their "forerunner" and High Priest, Christ Jesus.

Before the ascension of Christ every passage in the word of God, both Old Testament and New, that alludes to the state of the righteous dead, recognizes this fact. After the ascension it is not once recognized in the New Testament. Nor can any passage after that time be reconciled with that idea. This is significant.

Having observed the teaching upon this point previous to the ascension, let us now notice the other class and see how uniformly they indicate a different state of things.

When Stephen was stoned he looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said: "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." The natural inference is that he expected the Lord Jesus at the right hand of God, to receive his spirit. This would indicate that his soul was not going to paradise, as the souls of the righteous had been doing from the beginning, or, if so, that paradise now included the dwelling place of God and of His glorified Son. What we here find so plainly indicated, we find confirmed as we advance.

To the Corinthians Paul says: "For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens . . . Being therefore always of good courage, and knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; we are of good courage, I say, and are willing, rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord." Here it is clearly affirmed that when one is absent from the body he is present with the Lord. The body is represented as our home while we remain in it; but when we depart from it, we are at home with the Lord. This body-house is exchanged for a house not made with hands. And this house is in the heavens. It is not, then, in paradise, unless paradise has been removed from hades to "heaven itself," as Paul expresses it. And this house not made with hands, which we get in exchange for the body,

is "with the Lord." And the Lord is at "the right hand of the Father." Hence Paul's general statement corresponds with Stephen's vision and prayer.

Another passage bearing upon the point is found in the same Epistle. Paul says: "I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not; or whether out of the body, I know not; God knoweth,) such a one caught up even to the third heaven. And I know such a man (whether in the body, or apart from the body, I know not; God knoweth,) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." (2 Cor. xii: 2-4.)

Paul speaks this of himself. It is not my purpose to dwell upon the teaching of this wonderful passage. That is done in another sermon. I only wish to call attention to the fact that Paul found paradise in the "third heaven." He was "caught up into paradise," "even to the third heavens." The Jews had three heavens. The first was the atmospheric regions about us: "And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. And God called the firmament heaven." The second is the upper canopy, the place of the heavenly bodies: "And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth." The third was the dwelling-place of Jehovah. Macknight says: "In the language of the Jews, the *third heaven* is the seat of God, and of the holy angels, into which Christ ascended after his resurrection, but which is not

the object of men's senses as the other heavens are." Paul makes paradise and the third heaven one and the same. Therefore paradise was *at that time* in heaven itself, the holy habitation of God and the angels. Here the Lord reigns at the right hand of God. Hence Paul found in his experience what was indicated at Stephen's death, and in every other passage after the ascension of Jesus.

Previous to the glorification of Christ paradise was in hades. Every passage in the Bible so teaches. *Now* it is in heaven. Every passage after the resurrection so teaches. Heaven and hades are two very distinct places. They stand out in bold antithesis in the Bible. How, then, shall we reconcile these two distinct classes of clear Scripture texts, one of which locates paradise, the home of the righteous, in hades, and the other as clearly locates it in heaven itself, in the presence of the Lord and the holy angels? I know of but one theory on which it can be done. This I now submit as my main proposition:

*Paradise was the abode of the righteous in hades till the ascension and glorification of Jesus; then it was removed to heaven, and that department of hades was abolished.*

I now invite your attention to a few reasons for affirming this proposition. For several reasons Paradise, the intermediate state of the righteous, was located in hades till the glorification of Christ. Till then it was a necessity. After that the necessity no longer existed.

I. My first argument is that—

PREVIOUS TO THE GLORIFICATION OF CHRIST THERE WAS  
NO ABSOLUTE REMISSION OF SINS.

On this point the great Apostle to the Gentiles clearly testifies. In the tenth chapter of Hebrews he says:

“For the law having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect them that draw nigh. Else would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having been once cleansed, would have had no more conscience of sins? But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance made of sins year by year. For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.”

Here it is asserted—

(1.) That the sacrifices of the law could never make the worshipers perfect.

(2.) That the worshipers still had a conscience of sins.

(3.) That, by repeated sacrifice, there was a remembrance made again every year of the sins for which sacrifice had been previously offered.

(4.) That it was not possible for such sacrifices to take away sins.

In the eleventh verse the Apostle adds: “And every priest indeed standeth day by day ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, the which can never take away sins.”

All this was said in full view of the relation of these sacrifices to the atonement of Christ. With all their typical significance, and borrowed virtue from the blood of Jesus, they could not take away sins. They could not reach the conscience. As this point is of special



significance and importance in the establishing of my proposition, I invite your attention to the words of that prince of Biblical critics, Prof. J. W. McGarvey. In his Commentary on Acts, xiii: 39, he says:

“The assumption is not that justification can not be procured by *works of law*, for this is equally true under Christ; but that those under the law of Moses did not obtain remission of sins at all.

“Paul argues this assumption at length in the ninth and tenth chapters of Hebrews. The only provisions in the law at all connected with the remission of sins were its sacrifices, and he asserts of them: ‘It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.’ It can not be rightly assumed that he contemplated these sacrifices as considered apart from their typical meaning; for he makes no such distinction. He takes them just as he finds them, with all that belongs to them when offered in good faith, and makes the assertion that it was not possible for them to take away sins.”

One of the main points of dissimilarity between the old covenant and the new, is that in the new our sins and iniquities are remembered no more. Under the old they were continually remembered; but under the new they are “remembered against us no more forever.”

The blood of Jesus Christ alone can cleanse the soul from sin; and it had no actual cleansing power till with it an atonement was made in the holy place on high. The efficacy of the blood of Christ is because of the atonement. Apart from this His blood was of no more value than that of others. Hence His blood had no efficacy before the atonement. The blessings derived from it, therefore, were prospective and borrowed. But when Christ, as our High Priest, with His own blood, entered the holy place, and atoned for the sins of the world, its efficacy reached back to Adam, as well as forward to the end of time. The forgiveness of the Jewish and patriarchal ages was only prospect-

ive, but now it becomes actual. The account that had been kept and carried forward year after year was now canceled. In past ages God promised His children remission; but it was a promise enjoyed in prospect, not in realization. There still remained a "conscience of sins." Hence Paul says that while those ancient worthies obtained a good report through faith, they received not the thing promised, "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." It is affirmed that they died without being made perfect, and that they could not be made perfect apart from the better thing which God provided for us. Hence their perfection awaited that "better thing;" and that is the consummation or perfection secured by the blood of atonement. This is clearly stated in the ninth chapter of Hebrews: "And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." Here it is clearly stated that Christ's death was for the remission of transgressions under the first covenant. Had they been remitted before His death, His death could not have been for their remission. Thus it was by His own death, as a means, that Christ remitted the transgressions under former dispensations, in order that the called—God's faithful people—might receive the eternal inheritance promised.

In the third chapter of Romans, Paul affirms that God set forth Christ "to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his righteousness, because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God." Here it is clearly stated that the

sins committed previous to the shedding of the blood of Christ were *passed over*; and that now His blood is a propitiation for them, as well as for all sin till the end of time. The annual summing up of the sins of the people, and carrying them forward another year, to be remembered again at that time, and so on continually, shows how they were "passed over," till the death of Christ.

These scriptures clearly establish the fact that previous to the ascension and glorification of Christ, there was no absolute remission of sins. Those dying in faith in those ages obtained no absolute remission. They were not made perfect, but died awaiting the fulfillment of the promise of both through the atonement of Christ. Without this perfection by absolute remission, they could not go to heaven. No imperfection or unremitted sin can stand accepted in the presence of God. Hence an intermediate state of repose for the souls of the righteous till that perfection could be obtained was a necessity. They could not go into the immediate presence of God till made perfect. They could not be made perfect till the atonement was made. Hence their abode in paradise in hades was a necessity till Christ removed their disabilities and dedicated heaven by the blood of atonement.

2. My second argument is based on

#### THE HIGH PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.

In the tabernacle there were two distinct departments—the holy place and the most holy. That typified the church; this, heaven. The high priest alone went into the most holy place. The common priests could not go behind the vail separating it from the

holy place. Into this the high priest went once a year, on the great day of atonement, and made atonement for the people. In the eighth chapter of Hebrews, Paul argues that Christ has not gone into the holy place made with hands, as did the earthly high priests, but into heaven itself, with His own blood, to make an atonement for the sins of the world. Then, as our High Priest, He is our "forerunner." Hence the Apostle, in speaking of our hope which anchors within the vail—that is, behind the vail—in the most holy place, says: "Whether as a forerunner Jesus entered for us, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." That being true, it follows that Christ must be the *first* to enter "heaven itself." As "forerunner" He had to be the first. As High Priest He must enter the holy place and dedicate it with His own blood, before it could be entered by others. The blood of atonement must be sprinkled behind the vail before it was opened as the terminus of the new and living way. If any went there before Christ, He could not be their "forerunner." It follows, therefore, that God's ancient people could not go to heaven till Christ was glorified, and made the atonement. Hence an intermediate state in paradise was a necessity till that momentous event in the history of the world's redemption. This was most strikingly illustrated—typified—when the blood of atonement was shed. To this we invite your special consideration:

The holy place in the temple typified the church; the most holy, heaven. Between these there hung an impenetrable vail, behind which the worshipers in the holy place could neither see nor go. "This signify-

ing," says Paul, "that the way into the holy place hath not yet been made manifest, while as the first tabernacle is yet standing." The thing "signified," as I understand it, is this: that the way between earth and heaven was closed while the first tabernacle stood—while that typical religion lasted. As God's worshipping children could not go behind this vail, so they could not enter the holy place on high. And now do you remember what occurred when Jesus died? Do you remember how that when He bowed His sacred head in death and said, "It is finished," the mountains were rent, the graves of the dead were opened, and *the vail in the temple was rent in two from top to bottom?* This showed that the vail which hitherto had separated between earth and heaven was taken out of the way. This suggested to Paul the following striking language: "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, *by a new and living way*, which He hath consecrated for us, *through the vail*, that is to say, *his flesh*."

The vail in the temple, separating the holy from the most holy place, typified the body of Jesus, which had to be "broken" before the way into the holy place on high was "made manifest." But now, through the "rent vail of his flesh," we have a "new and living way" into "heaven itself," whither our "forerunner is for us entered." It follows, therefore, that the righteous could not enter heaven till this new and living way was prepared. Hence the intermediate state in paradise, a department of hades, was a necessity till the rent vail of the tabernacle, as a type, found its fulfillment in the offering of the blood of Jesus. As our

sacrifice His blood was shed ; as our High Priest He with it made an atonement. The offering was made on earth ; the atonement was made in heaven.

When Jesus, as our High Priest, entered heaven with the offering made on Calvary and dedicated it with His own blood, the efficacy of that atonement reached back over all the past and accomplished the perfection of which the faithful had received the promise. The way was now prepared, and their forerunner entered. Hence the obstructions and their disabilities were removed. The necessity for the intermediate state, therefore, no longer remained. Since the necessity no longer existed, we should expect its discontinuance. That it ceased to exist we have seen to be a clearly stated matter of New Testament teaching. To the removal of these long-standing disabilities we understand the Apostle to refer in our text. Read it again, as it appears in the Common Version :

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same ; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil ; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life time subject to bondage.”

Christ took upon Himself our humanity in order to die. He alone was born to die. We are born to live ; but He was born to die. Here two objects are distinctly stated as having been accomplished in His death :

I. He “destroyed” the devil. That is, He broke his power ; vanquished him. That is the meaning of the word destroy as here used. When Jesus died He went into hades. Its ponderous gates closed upon Him. He was a prisoner within its gates, and Satan

held the keys. Could he have held Jesus as his prisoner, as he had held all the rest of the human race, the story of the world's redemption would never have been told. Satan was clamorous to get the Son of God into the grave—under the dominion of death. He little dreamed that, in this, Jesus would only stoop to conquer. He voluntarily went within. He feared not to meet Satan in his own dominion. When, on the third day, He came forth, He wrested from Satan the keys of hades, unlocked its ponderous gates, and came forth a triumphant conqueror. Not only so, but He “dragged the captor captive.” Hence He says to John, on the Isle of Patmos: “I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.” Hitherto Satan had carried them, but now they suspend from the girdle of the Son of God. Hence in His own death the Son of God destroyed the power of Satan over the dominion of death.

2. He delivered them who, through fear of death, were during their life-time subject to bondage. You will observe that those delivered were not living at the time. Their earthly life was a thing of the past. Their deliverance was after death. During their life they were subject to bondage. This bondage was due to their fear of death. They feared death; and this fear amounted to a bondage of the spirit. The future was not clear to them as it is to us. Hence they enjoyed not the freedom of mind and spirit in regard to it that the informed child of God may now enjoy. Now this people who went into the dominion of death with this bondage of spirit were delivered. Delivered from what? We can see but one thing from which



deliverance was possible. They were delivered from their condition at that time. They were delivered from hades. They had long been waiting the finished work of redemption, and, now that the glad hour had come, they followed in the train of their conquering King and Lord; and paradise in hades is eternally no more. The rent vail in the temple, at the death of Jesus, showed that the way into heaven was opened up through this "new and living way;" and no sooner is the way opened than it is filled by the thronging hosts that in the paradise of hades had been waiting a way of access to the Father.

As another evidence of this, your attention is directed to an expression in the twentieth chapter of Revelation. In describing the scenes of the last day, it is said that death and hades shall deliver up the dead that are in them; and death and hades shall be cast into the lake of fire. The whole tenantry of hades go into the lake of fire. Hence there are no righteous among them. But all the righteous were in hades previous to the death and glorification of Jesus. It follows, therefore, that the righteous have been or will be delivered from hades before the judgment day. Its wicked only remain. We conclude, therefore, that hades delivered up its righteous at the call of its conquering King and Lord, when He had through His death prepared the way.

The immense confusion of thought on this subject is due, I think, to the fact that it has not been studied in its relation to the death and glorification of Jesus. We are well aware of the blunders of the sectarian world in regard to the conditions of salvation, growing out of the fact that they were changed by the

death and glorification of Christ. They go back to a former dispensation to find the conditions of salvation. By blending these with the Gospel of Christ they make everlasting confusion. Have we not been committing a like blunder in regard to the condition of the dead? Every passage of the word of God relied upon to prove that there now exists an intermediate state of the righteous dead, so far as we have seen, belongs to a former dispensation. Not a passage under the Christian dispensation hints at such a thing. This should make one very suspicious of his conclusions. We have failed to consider the effect of the death of Christ on the dead, as well as the living. It affected heaven, earth, and hell. With these facts all before us, we can readily see how it was that Lazarus and the thief went to paradise; and yet to be absent from the body *now*, is to be present with the Lord. We can see how paradise has been removed to the "third heaven," where God and the Savior and the holy angels dwell.

#### OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

But I now invite your attention to some objections that may be urged against the theory. For while the arguments may appear conclusive, yet if you have in mind what you regard as irreconcilable objections, you are still in a state of doubt and uncertainty. I will, therefore, notice the most plausible objections I have ever heard urged against the position.

1. Ten days after the ascension of Christ, Peter said, "for David ascended not into the heavens." From this it has been argued that David was not in heaven at that time; and if he was not, of course others were not. And this was after the glorification of Christ.

Hence this fact refutes the theory. We grant that this would have some force, but would be by no means conclusive, if Peter had been speaking simply of the spirit of David. But this was not the case. On the contrary, his argument includes the *body* of David. He is showing why the language of David concerning his soul not being in hades, and his body not seeing corruption, did not apply to him, but to Christ. Hence he reminds them that David was dead and buried, and that his tomb was among them. They had all seen it and knew it. Hence his body did see corruption. He did not ascend to heaven at death, for his grave, containing his body, had been among them since he was gathered to his fathers. The statement, therefore, does not refer to his spirit apart from his body; hence it has no bearing on our position.

2. Another objection is that it obviates the necessity for the final judgment. The argument is that if we go to heaven at death, the question of our eternal abode in heaven is settled. And if this be settled at death, there is no necessity for a final judgment. But I can see no force in this. The same objection might be urged against the old paradise in hades. When Lazarus went to Paradise and was "comforted," carried there by the angels, was not the question of his eternal happiness in heaven settled? Would he have to wait till the judgment day to know whether he would be saved or lost? Certainly not. No one thus contends. Then our theory does not affect that question any more than the old one. The fact is, the final judgment is not a day to determine whether men will be saved or lost. That question is settled at death, whether our theory be true or not. It is a day of the

final summing up of all the consequences of our lives, and a vindication of God's righteousness in dealing with them as He has. It is a day of the "revelation of the righteous judgments of God." It decides the *size* of one's cup of bliss for all eternity, but not the fact that one is to have a cup. It is not a day to decide whether one's name is to be put into the Lamb's book of life—the names of the righteous are already there—but it decides the degree of honor to be conferred on these names. One can come from the immediate presence of the Lord to learn the results of that final reckoning, as well as from the old paradise in hades. Hence that objection amounts to nothing.

3. It is also objected that the theory I have advocated obviates the necessity for the resurrection of the body. I accept the resurrection of the body as a fact, because Paul so teaches. The philosophy of it I do not concern myself about. Paul says that when we are absent from the body we are present with the Lord; and that there we are "clothed upon with our house, or body, which is from heaven." This has to be accepted as well as the other. God's purpose is to give us back our old bodies glorified, and fashioned like unto the glorious body of our Elder Brother. His purpose in this He has not revealed. Our theory contains nothing conflicting with it. Hence as an objection it is *nil*. This objection assumes that one can not go to heaven without this earthly body glorified; or that if he could, then he would have no further use for the body. But this is to assume that of which we know nothing. When Paul was caught up to heaven he did not know whether he was in the body or out.

He may have been in. He may have been out. Then to be there out of the body is a possibility, and yet every thing be so life-like, and one so like himself, that he does not know he is out of the body. It follows, therefore, that being in heaven does not depend on our having our glorified bodies.

As to the eternal state, I think the Bible clearly teaches that this earth, regenerated by fire and adapted to our wants, is to be the future home of the saints. While the boundless universe may lie within their range, the earth will be their home. And if such naturalness and life-likeness characterize our abode till that final glorified earthly home is complete, what may we expect of that? It is the perfection, and must surpass in all respects any thing preceding. This is the picture which John saw as the consummation of all things: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

At death the saints go to heaven to be with God. After the new earth is ready, God comes down to it to dwell with the saints. That life eternal in the new earth will be just as real as this. God hasten the day when it may be ours. When only the saints shall dwell upon it, and sin and pain and death shall be no more. When this frail, suffer-

ing, worn-out body will be purified and glorified and made like unto the glorified body of the dear Redeemer. Glorious finality! The soul grows wild with the thought. Heaven help us to be patient while we wait.

## SERMON XV.

## PAUL'S EXPERIENCE IN PARADISE.

"I must needs glory, though it is not expedient; but I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not; or whether out of the body, I know not; God knoweth,) such a one caught up even to the third heaven. And I know such a man (whether in the body, or apart from the body, I know not; God knoweth,) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."—2 *Cor.* xii: 1-4.

THIS is a peculiar statement of Holy Writ. Its main lesson is in that which is "written between the lines." That is, its special interest and importance consist in that which is necessarily implied, rather than in that which is verbally expressed. It is the most singular experience on record. That Paul refers to himself as the one who had it, there can be no reasonable doubt. This is evident from the seventh verse. The fact of his having such an experience had been kept a secret for these fourteen years, and now it is referred to only when his authority as an Apostle is called in question. So far as we can see, he had made no use of it; and it had resulted in his "thorn in the flesh," which God gave him, lest he should be unduly exalted by his wonderful experience.

In answer to the question, "for what purpose did God give him this experience?" different theories have been advanced. Of these I have seen nothing satisfactory. That it was to give him additional information for his work as an Apostle, is contradicted by the



fact that what he heard could not be repeated. It was impossible to utter the words heard, and unlawful to reveal the things experienced in that hour. Hence it could be of no service to Paul in this respect. Besides, he needed nothing of this kind. He was fully inspired for his work, and guided into all necessary knowledge and truth by the Holy Spirit.

It is generally argued, and with more plausibility, that this experience was given Paul to encourage him in his life of trial, on whose severities he was then just entering. But against this there are insurmountable objections. It was not necessary. Christ encouraged Paul when necessary, in a more simple way. When he was in prison in Jerusalem and his life in great danger from the excited multitudes, "the Lord stood by him [at night,] and said: be of good cheer: for as thou hast testified concerning me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." Thus was Paul assured that God would preserve him and bring him to his long-desired destination. So at various times, when necessary, was he encouraged in like manner. Hence such an experience was unnecessary; and God does not do unnecessary things. In addition to this, God had to give him a severe thorn in the flesh to keep him from being unduly exalted by this experience. It is unreasonable to conclude that God would give him a thing for his encouragement, and then punish him the rest of life to prevent his being injured by it. Other objections might be urged, but these are sufficient to compel a rejection of the theory. My judgment is, that the failures to find a reason for this experience are due to the fact that it was an incidental rather than a divinely planned thing.

The lessons of wondrous interest and value incidentally growing out of it, furnish a better reason for its revelation than all the reasons combined that we have seen presented as God's special purpose in giving it. This will be manifest as we observe the teaching of the lesson.

The Jews had three heavens. First, the atmospheric regions around us: "And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. And God called the firmament heaven." Second, regions of the heavenly bodies: "And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth." Third, the dwelling-place of Jehovah: "Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel." Scores of passages might be given including each of the above ideas; but this is unnecessary. One clear statement of God's word establishes any thing. The strength of God's testimony is not dependent on the multiplication table. But on this point we beg to offer a statement of the distinguished Doctor Macknight. He says: "In the language of the Jews, the *third heaven* is the seat of God, and of the holy angels, into which Christ ascended after his resurrection, but which is not the object of men's senses as the other heavens are." It follows, then, that Paul was caught up into the presence of God, to the place of his holy habitation. Whether in the body or out of it, he was taken to the headquarters of heaven. The word implies that

he was snatched away suddenly. It was a sudden and unexpected transaction.

The transaction is covered by the terms "vision" and "revelation." Revelation, as here used, primarily means an uncovering. Just as you would remove the cover and see that which was hid thereby, so Paul had the cover removed, and he saw the things of the "third heaven" as they are hid behind the veil.

A vision, in its New Testament use, is seeing with a supernatural sight what would be seen by the natural eye, if it were there; and the one corresponds precisely to the other. It is remarkable how closely a vision corresponded to the reality. Consider one out of a number of cases. Peter was cast into prison in Jerusalem. It was during the Passover, and Herod intended after the feast was over "to bring him forth to the people." He was putting disciples to death to please the Jews. The church regarded Peter's case as next to hopeless; and they were all earnestly engaged in prayer for him. The night before Herod was to bring him forth, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and guards stood before the door. That night the angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shined in the cell. And the angel smote Peter on the side, waked him up, and said: get up quickly. Then his chains fell off. And the angel said: gird yourself, put on your sandals, gather your outer garment about you, and follow me. And Peter quickly and quietly complied. He got up from between the two soldiers, to whom he was chained, and left them sleeping. Following the angel he passed out of the prison, went through the guards that stood before the door, passed through the first and the sec-

ond wards, through the iron gate leading into the city, that opened to them of its own accord, passed through one of the principal streets; and then the angel left him. During all this time Peter was wide awake and intensely concerned. He was in no drowsy, dreamy mood. Yet he mistook the grand reality of the whole thing for a vision. "He knew not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision." Here was a man accustomed to having visions. He knew what a vision was. And yet a striking reality, varied and numerous in its parts, done under his direct observation, in which he was the most active and interested party, was mistaken for a vision. It follows, therefore, that the correspondence of the one to the other is perfect. Consequently, whether this experience of Paul was a vision or a reality, it amounts to the same, since the one precisely corresponds to the other.

Paul says he did not know whether at the time of the experience, he was in the body or out of it. It was in one of three ways. It was a vision; or he was caught up bodily into heaven; or it was a separation of the spirit from the body, just as is the case in death, and the spirit was taken to the third heaven while the body remained on the earth. If in either of the two former, he was in the body. If in the latter, he was out of the body. He could not tell at the time whether he was in the one condition or the other. And he did not know even at the time of writing that Epistle. This necessarily implies a number of very interesting and valuable things to which your attention will be directed.

This experience occurred fourteen years before the

time of the writing of that Epistle. There is no authority for the word "above," as found in the common version. According to Bishop Usher's chronology, this was the time he was stoned in the city of Lystra. My judgment is that the time of his stoning was the time of this experience. I do not assert this dogmatically, but I give it as an opinion. I will give you a few reasons for so thinking. (1.) It corresponds to the time, according to the best chronology I can obtain. (2.) Men have entirely failed to give a satisfactory reason for it, which favors the idea that it was largely accidental, and not previously planned for a purpose. (3.) The recovery of Paul from the stoning was miraculous. He rose up from a condition supposed, at least, to be death, and went immediately back into the city, and entered again upon his work. He had been stoned till life seemed to be extinct. Then he was dragged along the streets as if he had been a dead beast. They dragged him out of the city and left him surrounded by his companions on the outside commons. While they wept around him, mourning him as dead, he suddenly rose up and went back to his work. Here was no gradual resuscitation; no convalescence from the deep bruises and lacerations of his body. His restoration was clearly miraculous. Hence actual death, or temporary suspension of vitality, could have been overcome by the power actually exerted, just as well as not. Death is but a destruction of the vital functions, caused by the separation of the spirit from the body. Nor are they instantly destroyed. Destruction is the result of continued suspension. Hence all that was necessary to this experience, out of the body, at the time of the stoning, was a

temporary suspension of the vital forces. This was necessary at any time, if it was out of the body; and Paul says that it may have been. (4.) We find no other event in his life within the range of time indicated that would suggest any thing of the kind. And for it to have been given apart from any incident to a certain extent producing it, would imply the giving of it for some special purpose; and we are not only without a hint that this was so; but, so far, the world has failed to harmonize such purpose with the revealed facts. For these and other reasons that might be given, I regard this as the most probable time of the experience. Of course this question is not to be settled definitely. For Paul did not know whether he was in the body or out when he had it, and we may not hope to be wiser than he.

It may be well to add here that the word "suppose"—"supposing that he was dead"—does not necessarily preclude the idea that he was. It is used several times in the New Testament where the thing supposed was true. Hence it may have been so used here. In such case the historians simply record the matter as it appeared to them, without regard to the correctness or incorrectness of their supposition.

In the event that this was the time of Paul's experience, then there was a temporary suspension of the vital functions while he was stoned into unconsciousness. The spirit took a temporary flight from the body and reveled in the bliss of heaven while his body was dishonored as the body of a beast. While his body was dragged along the streets of Lystra and lay on the commons as the body of a brute, his companions standing around him and mourning the fall of

their leader, his soul was drinking in the joys of the eternal world; his ears were hearing words impossible for human lips to utter; the grand realities of the "third heaven," the dwelling-place of God, were seen and felt and enjoyed. What was true in this case is true in every other case of the separation of body and spirit of a child of God. When we stand around the lifeless body of one who has departed to be with the Lord, while our souls are filled with grief at the thought of our separation, their souls are filled with heavenly rapture. They are taking in, in their new experience, the first impressions and joys of their presence with the Lord. Paul says to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. Then the child of God is present with the Lord while we weep around his lifeless body ere it is laid away to rest. This fact should be very consoling to us when we are called upon to lay away the bodies of our loved ones till they shall be awakened in the last day by the trump of God, and clothed in the image of Jesus. To know that they are with the Lord, experiencing all the joys of that eternal state; that their present home is one of grand reality, where they will be "clothed upon with their house which is from heaven," till their glorified bodies are given back to them, fills our soul with resignation and joy. And when we contemplate our own departure, realizing that the time is at hand, it robs death of its gloom, and fills us with a longing to be free from the pains and sorrows of life, and to be at home with the Lord.

While we give it as our judgment that this experience of Paul was at the time of his stoning—a temporary separation of body and spirit—the lessons which



we derive from the incident do not depend on that. They are equally true, following as necessary consequences, in any view of the case. Whether he was in the body or out, whether it was produced by a separation of body and spirit, or whether he was caught up bodily, or whether it was a vision, the lessons taught are the same. I wish this distinctly borne in mind. Our theory about it does not affect its teaching. And I now invite your attention to some things clearly and necessarily established by the brief statements of the passage.

1. It refutes Materialism. This phase of infidelity holds that man is all matter. That when he dies all there is of him dies. That there is no life apart from the body. The "soul-sleeping" class of materialists hold that the spirit does not exist apart from the body. Hence it sleeps as unconscious as the body till the last day; then it will be created again and united to the resurrected and glorified body. Every phase of materialism is refuted by this experience. Paul says that at the time it occurred and even at the time of writing the Epistle, he did not know whether he was in the body or out. Since he did not know whether he was in or out, he may have been out. If such an experience is not possible to one out of the body, then Paul would have known that he was not out of the body. But since he did not know whether he was in the body or out, it follows that one may have such an experience out of the body. Hence existence, with seeing, hearing and realizing such life-like and wonderful things as Paul realized in the third heaven, may be enjoyed by one out of the body. Therefore life does not depend on the body. It continues apart from

the body. But when one is "out of the body," he is what the world calls dead. Hence life after death is clearly established, and materialism clearly refuted, by this experience. Thus this soulless, cheerless, gloomy theory of religion (?) is incidentally and completely overturned in a way not susceptible of refutation. I am satisfied that the best attempt within human power to break its force and show its want of absolute conclusiveness, would only be laughable for its puerility. This much may be considered settled.

2. It refutes another modern form of infidelity known as Spiritualism. This claims to communicate with the spirits of the departed. It is the opposite extreme from Materialism in some respects. They claim that the imparting of information to the living by the spirits of the dead, is not only extensively practiced, but meets the divine approbation. But Paul's experience may have been out of the body. What is true of it, therefore, is true of one out of the body. For if anything connected with it could not be true of one out of the body, then Paul would have known that he was not out of the body. Hence what is true in this case is true in every case where one is out of the body. But Paul says it was unlawful for him to reveal the things heard at that time. Not only were the words heard unutterable; their repetition to men was also unlawful. This was doubtless the reason why Paul had never mentioned this wonderful event in his life during the fourteen intervening years. And now, while he refers to the fact, he reveals nothing of the experience. Being unlawful in this case, it is unlawful in any case. For, since he did not know whether he was apart from the body or not, it only expresses what would have been

the result had he been apart from the body. And expressing what would have been the result had he been apart from the body in that case, he expresses this result in every case. It follows, therefore, that it is unlawful in any case for those to reveal to the living what they experience while absent from the body, even where they have the opportunity of so doing. According to the teaching of the Bible, none have had this opportunity except those who have been called back to a life in the body, and with these revelation was unlawful. It follows, therefore, that if there should now be any communication with the living on the part of the dead, it is in violation of divine law. The parties are law-breakers; hence in rebellion against God. Being in rebellion against Him, they are under His condemnation. Hence, if there be any such communication, it is engaged in only by the wicked. It is, therefore, the work of Satan, and not the work of God. Being the work of the wicked under the lead of Satan, it is a lie; for he was a liar from the beginning, and all his works deceptive. With Christian people, therefore, it should have no respect. We believe there is no reality about it; that the whole thing is a delusion and a snare of the devil. But if there be anything in it, it is contrary to God's will, is engaged in only by the wicked, and is all the work of Satan.

Paul says it was unlawful for him to utter the things which he heard, and that he may have been absent from the body when he heard them. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, in every case, he tells us, as well as in this case. He does not say that God specially forbade him to utter the things he then heard, making that a special case; but that it

was unlawful. He was restrained by the general law governing the case, and not by specific inhibition. Hence we find the same law governing all cases of which we have any account in the word of God. Of all those who had been absent from the body, and for any reason were recalled, not one of them ever uttered a word in revelation of his experience in paradise. Lazarus was in the grave four days. He was dead perhaps five. During this time he was absent from the body. He was in paradise. What an experience he had! How eagerly would his friends listen to his recital of what he saw and heard during his trip to the spirit land! What a theme for a lecture in modern times! Think of a fluent talker traveling over the land, telling the people his five days' experience in paradise! What flaming head-lines! What a theme—**FIVE DAYS IN PARADISE!!** The country would go wild. Knowing that he was actually dead for that length of time, and that his body decayed under the hand of death, the interest to know what he experienced during his absence from the body would absorb every other. You can see at a glance the wisdom of God in putting His veto on every thing of that sort. Hence Lazarus never intimated a thing of what he saw or heard or felt while his body was in the grave. The same is true of all others whom Christ or the Apostles brought back from the spirit land. Not even the Son of God himself said a word, during the forty days, concerning His trip to paradise while His body was in the grave. God has set His veto on any revelation of that nature. We may not be able to know all the reasons why, but some of them are very evident.

From the beginning God designed that men should

be saved on the great principle of justification by faith. This has held good in all ages. God has never permitted anything that conflicted with it. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Hence God ties us down to His book in order to the faith that He requires. He has given men but one book, and He intends that they shall honor it. He intends that they shall never become independent of it. He has made it the source and the limit of our information concerning the other world. Had the dead the power and the privilege of communicating with the living, of what use would be the Bible? Why go back to the writings of men two thousand years old to learn what we can get direct from head-quarters by those whom we know and love? It would be like giving up the express and the telegraph for the stage-coach of half a century ago. With such communications the world would soon have no more use for the Bible than we have for a last year's almanac. The word of the Lord is to abide forever. God intends that men shall honor it in all ages, and be dependent upon it for the faith that saves the soul and the knowledge that makes one wise unto salvation. Hence He has put His veto on the revelation of anything experienced by one while absent from the body.

3. Paul asserts that he was caught up into the third heaven, and then asserts that this was paradise. It follows, therefore, that paradise, at that time, was in the third heaven. The third heaven was the dwelling-place of God.

Previous to the ascension and coronation of Christ, paradise was in hades. It was the abode of the righteous in hades. Hades included all the dead, and par-

adise was its department for the righteous. When Christ died He went to hades. The Apostle Peter, on the day of Pentecost, said that the prophecy of David—

“Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hades,  
Neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption”—

referred to Christ; and argued that His soul was not left in hades; that death had no power to hold Him, and that they were witnesses of the fact that He came forth from the dead. But while He was in hades during the time that His body was in the grave, He was also in paradise; for He said to the penitent thief, “This day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” When Lazarus, the beggar, died, he was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom—which was but another expression for paradise—and the rich man went to hades. Other scriptures might be given to show that paradise was then a department of hades; but these are sufficient. No amount of testimony could make it clearer or stronger. But when Paul had this experience, he found that paradise was in the third heaven. It had, therefore, been removed from hades to the dwelling-place of Jehovah. To this the whole New Testament record strictly corresponds. Till the coronation of Jesus, all references to paradise put it in hades. After that time we have no further intimation of its existence in hades. From this time on, Paul says that to be absent from the body was to be present with the Lord. Hence Stephen, in the moment of death, looked up and saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Hence he went to the presence of the Lord, and the Lord was

in the presence of God. Previous to the ascension of Jesus there were reasons necessitating the location of paradise in hades. When He was coronated, became our High Priest, and made the atonement, these reasons ceased to exist, and paradise was removed from hades. These reasons are fully given in the sermon on "The State of the Righteous Dead;" hence they will not be repeated here. The New Testament, as I understand it, had previously taught that paradise was removed from hades to the presence of God, and in his experience Paul found this to be a fact.

4. Paul's experience proves that heaven is a world of reality; of literal and rational life; and not a visionary, mythical state. He was in heaven. He was in the presence of heavenly beings. Who spoke the words that he could not lawfully repeat, we are not informed. They were men, angels, or Christ; some or all. But with these heavenly intelligences, with all he saw, and with all he heard; with the glorious experiences of that hour, so wonderful as to require a thorn in the flesh the rest of life, lest he should be "exalted above measure"—in the experiencing of all this, he did not know whether he was in the body or out of it. Not only the things that he saw and heard on the part of others, but in contemplating *himself*—his own personality, his identity—he found nothing different from what it would have been had he been in the body. Hence it was all literal and life-like. There was nothing of himself different from what it would have been had he been in the body. For if so, then he would have known that he was out of the body. It follows, then, that the third heaven, the dwelling-place of God and of our blessed Savior, the



home of the redeemed with the angels that have ever been messengers of love and mercy to men—this land of light and love and heavenly associations, is so real, so literal, so life-like, that one can not tell whether he is in the body or out. Hence it is a place and a life of reality, of substance, corresponding to the substance and reality of this. The heaven, then, to which we go, is not a world of myth and shadow. It is not a visionary, unreal place; but is as substantial and real and life-like in all its features as the life and world which we now enjoy.

5. This experience confirms the fact of our future knowledge and recognition. The New Testament abundantly teaches that we shall carry with us to the other world our knowledge of this, and that we shall know each other there; and this experience of Paul confirms it. In other words, he found it just as it is taught. When he considered himself—his own identity, his personality—externally and internally, he could not tell whether he was in the body or out. He may have been out. But if so, it was just the same as if he had been in. Consequently, if he did not have his body of flesh, he had one that so perfectly corresponded to it that he could not tell the difference. For if he could have told the difference between his old body and the one he had in its place if he was out of it, then he would have known whether he was in or out of the old body. But this he did not know. Hence there was no perceptible difference between the two.

Paul says to these brethren in the same Epistle: "For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a

house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven." Our earthly tabernacle, which falls into decay, is our body. In this we suffer. In this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. The house not made with hands awaiting us, that we will get in exchange for this, is ours when this earthly one is dissolved. In the same connection Paul says: "Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. . . . but we are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord." The body, then, is our "home" here, and when we leave it we have a "home" with the Lord. We do not go naked into the presence of God. We are "clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven." In this heavenly clothing we continue till we get back from the grave our glorified bodies. As there is no perceptible difference between this body and the old one left behind, recognition is a necessity; as much so as it is in this life. If two friends meet in heaven, and neither can see any thing in himself by which he can determine whether he is in the old body or out of it, he certainly can not so distinguish anything of the kind in his friend. It follows, therefore, that he is compelled to recognize him as his friend, just as if the meeting were in the body.

Then when one can make no internal distinction; when he can discover nothing in thought, in knowledge, in emotions, by which he can determine whether he is in the old body or out, it follows that mental recourses and operations are the same. Hence he carries with him to the eternal world all his knowledge

of this and of the dear things associated with it. But as that theme is specially treated elsewhere, its further notice is not necessary here.

It follows, then, that heaven, as experienced by Paul, is a world of grand reality; a world, one hour's experience of which would exalt one above measure for life in this world, unless counteracted; a world of life-likeness and substantial joy, where we shall know as we are known, and into the realities and joys of which we enter the moment we depart from the body to dwell forever with the Lord.

## SERMON XVI.

## FUTURE RECOGNITION.

“For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child; now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then, face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know fully, even as also I was fully known. But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.”—*I Cor. xiii: 9-13.*

I AM by no means satisfied that this language refers to the future state—the state beyond death. ‘ On the contrary, I incline to a different theory—that of the organic perfection of the church and complete revelation. Hence I shall not use it as an argument; but it suggests the theme before us, many able critics holding that it refers to perfection and knowledge in the future state. As it suggests our theme, but does not establish the truth of it, I simply use it as suggesting the proposition before us.

Except the question of salvation itself, perhaps no question is so absorbingly interesting to the child of God as that of knowing our friends in heaven. We all have friends and loved ones that have gone on before. They are waiting for us on the other side. Shall we meet them there? And when we meet them, shall we know them? Shall we know them as we knew them here? Shall we know them as they are, in their own personal identity? Know them as our loved ones whom we were expecting to meet on the

other shore? Shall we remember them in connection with all we knew of them in this life? Or shall we meet them as strangers? Shall they, like all the rest of the heavenly host, be known simply as redeemed spirits, whose acquaintance is to be formed, and who possess no knowledge of an earthly life to distinguish them as those dear to us here? These are questions of absorbing interest to God's children. On the answer depends the very nature of the future life, the very thing that constitutes it a future life. We have found from observation that God's children have a great anxiety to have the question settled affirmatively; but many have their doubts and difficulties. If I can remove these, and leave one soul more resting in a firm unfaltering faith that we shall "know each other there," I shall feel abundantly paid for my work.

I shall first notice—

#### OBJECTIONS TO THE THEORY.

1. The first objection urged against the theory is this: In the eternal world we shall be simply spirits, and how can formless, featureless spirits recognize one another? But I ask, gentle reader, how came you in possession of that idea? Search the chambers of memory and ask, whither did it come? Did you get it from the word of God? If so, what chapter or verse contains the thought? The idea is not once expressed in Holy Writ. The thought came from the creeds, not from the word of God. For instance, the Methodist Discipline says: "God is a spirit, without body or parts." The Presbyterian Confession of Faith goes a step further and expresses it thus: "God is a spirit, without body, parts or passions." A better definition

of *nothing*, John Calvin and all his followers could never have made. If a thing has neither body, parts, nor passions, pray what has it? This nothingness is predicated of God, and of course the same is true of all other spirits. But this is all unwarranted assumption. It is true that God is *spirit*. "God is spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." He is not *a* spirit, as the Common Version has it; but simply spirit. It by no means follows from this, that He is bodiless. Paul says: "there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." He also says that when we are absent from our earthly bodies, we will be present with the Lord; and when we are thus present with the Lord we are clothed upon with a body prepared for us in the heavens. The spiritual body is just as much a reality as the natural body. It is no more "formless and featureless" than the natural body. Indeed the form and features of the one are the form and features of the others. Of this I have not a shadow of a doubt. This objection, therefore, I regard as wholly destitute of foundation in truth.

2. Another objection, which is urged with more plausibility and effect is, that if we know our friends whom we meet there, we shall miss those whom we do not meet, and when we know that they have failed to get there, we shall be unhappy as a consequence. This is quite plausible, and has staggered the faith of many. But it is purely fallacious. Let us calmly consider it.

Why do you conclude that it will make you unhappy to miss some of your friends from the heavenly

circle? Because you love them, you say. Then consider that the Savior loves poor sinners with a love as infinitely above yours, as the heavens are above the earth. "Greater love hath no man than this, that one lay down his life for his friend." But Christ gave His for His enemies. His love is infinitely beyond ours. And yet sinners whom He thus loves are going down to perdition every day. The broad road that leads to death is thronged with them. And yet the Son of God is not unhappy. The fact that sinners miss heaven does not "deprive heaven of its happiness to Him." Then why should the missing of some whom we love render us unhappy? When we are with Him, and become like Him, conformed to His image, and having His mind, that which does not detract from His happiness, will not detract from ours. Hence this objection, plausible as it first appears, is without foundation in fact. But we now turn to the positive side of the question and notice some of the things in its favor. It must stand or fall by the word of God. This is the final appeal.

1. Our first argument shall be based upon

#### THE INDESTRUCTIBILITY OF THE MEMORY.

Man is a compound being. He has a dual nature. He is composed of a mortal and an immortal part. The immortal part thinks, reasons, reflects, remembers. On it all moral, intellectual and spiritual impressions are made. This part never dies. It simply passes from one state of existence to another. It is what Paul calls the "inward man." It dwells in the body. It is the "I" of Paul: "when *I* am at home in the body, *I* am absent from the Lord; and when *I*



am absent from the body, *I* am at home with the Lord." Since the inner man alone thinks, reasons and remembers; and since it never dies, but simply changes its place of residence, we see nothing from which we may infer that any impression upon it is marred or obliterated. There is nothing in the death of the body viewed from a physiological standing-point, or from that of revelation, that obliterates any thing from the memory, as far as we can see. On the contrary, the clogs and imperfections are removed, and memory perfected.

It is a debatable question whether one ever absolutely forgets any thing that he once really knew. We say that we have forgotten; but some trifling circumstance will bring to the mind what we thought was long since forgotten, and it is again as vivid as on the day it occurred. Visit the place of your childhood after a period of more than half a century. How the memory is crowded with things of which you had not thought for many years! Often had you said of certain things: "I have forgotten it." But now it comes up again in all the freshness of childhood. You had not forgotten. Accumulating events had simply driven the thought back in the chambers of memory, and the dust of time had settled upon it; and now, so soon as there is a reproducing cause, it stands forth as fresh as if it were a thing of yesterday!

Sometimes when the mind is in an abnormal state, excited by fever, one will report with fluency and accuracy that which in a normal state he has "entirely forgotten." But even if we do forget things with which the mind is not engaged, on account of the burden of subsequent things and the clogs of the flesh,

this would not, in the least, affect the things of memory when one passes from under these hindrances to a state of perfection. What one knows then he will never cease to know

2. My second argument is based upon

#### THE NATURE OF REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS.

“For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” (II. Cor. v: 10.)

The question of future recognition is not directly raised in the word of God. Like the existence of God, it is simply taken for granted. While it is nowhere discussed, it is astonishing how much of the New Testament would be meaningless if deprived of that idea. Take your New Testament and, beginning at the beginning, draw your pencil around all the passages in which this idea is involved, that could have no meaning without it, and you will be astonished at the amount of Scripture you will have to mark. Your attention will be directed to a number of such passages.

The passage just quoted expresses the principle on which is based future rewards and punishments. We are to be judged for the deeds done in the body. How can we be thus judged, and know that it is the righteous judgment of God, unless we remember the kind of life we have lived, and the deeds done in the body, for which we are judged? If we do not “obey the truth, but find pleasure in unrighteousness,” there will be heaped upon us “indignation and wrath.” If we know for what we are judged, and that our judgment

is just, we are compelled to remember ourselves as ourselves, and the life we have lived, and why we have received this or that reward. The Bible teaches that we shall say "amen" to the judgments of God. Future rewards and punishments, in their very nature, demand a knowledge of this life as connected with that. They would be utterly meaningless without it. From the knowledge and memory which this principle of judgment demands, recognition follows as a consequence. We can not know ourselves and our past lives, as these rewards and punishments demand, without knowing those associated with us in the "deeds done in the body."

3. My third argument is based upon some facts connected with

#### THE TRANSFIGURATION.

When Christ was transfigured before three of His disciples, there appeared and remained with them Moses and Elijah. Moses had been dead near fifteen hundred years, and his body sleeping in an unknown grave. Elijah had not seen death, for God took him. The body of one had returned to dust, and that of the other had been "changed," as those will be who are found awaiting the Bridegroom. But they both appeared to the disciples and talked with them. The difference in the disposition of their bodies seemed to make no difference in their existence at that time. This is in harmony with Paul's teaching, that the body with which we are "clothed upon" at death does not differ materially, so far as can be observed, from that which we shall have when our vile bodies are fashioned like unto His glorious body. Moses and Elijah ap-

peared as themselves. They were recognized as such. They were "two men." They were not "formless, featureless spirits," but *men*. And they appeared "in glory." They were, therefore, in the glorified state; and yet they were *men*, as much as Moses and Elijah were men on the earth. They talked with Jesus about His death, which was soon to take place at Jerusalem. It follows, therefore, that in their home in glory they knew about the Savior's work upon the earth, and they knew that He was soon to die at Jerusalem. It is not said that Jesus talked to them about His death, but they talked to Him. They, therefore, had to know the things of which they talked. Since these saints were men in their state of glory, and knew the important things going on upon the earth in connection with the scheme of redemption, we must infer that the same is true of others. And this means a knowledge of the two worlds as they have been experienced; of our continued personality, and the recognition of those associated with us.

4. My fourth argument is based on the principle involved in the angel's remark to John, near the close of the book of Revelation, that he was one who

#### KEPT THE WORDS OF THIS BOOK.

When John saw and heard the grand things shown him by the angel, he fell down before him to worship. But the angel forbade it. He said to John: "I am a fellow-servant with thee, and with thy brethren the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book; worship God." From this it appears that the angel that communicated to John all the grand things of the book of Revelation was a fellow-servant with

John, and with the prophets, and with those who kept the words of this book. The expression "this book" must mean the word of God, of which the book of Revelation is a part. Angels have never been under the law which has been expressed from dispensation to dispensation, under which the human family have been placed. They have never "kept the words" of the book which God gave to guide the human race. We have no intimation that any but the descendants of Adam were ever governed by the Bible. Hence the "angel" that revealed to John the things contained in that book, had once been an inhabitant of the earth. Since he was a fellow-servant with John, and also with the prophets, it is highly probable that he was one of the prophets. At any rate, he was a man, a descendant of Adam, in a state of "glory," as were Moses and Elijah. It follows from his statement that he knew himself as a certain one, and his earth life was all known to him. The book of Revelation gives us something of his knowledge, though infallibly guided by the hand of God. We infer that all others know themselves in connection with their past lives as he did. Every known fact of Holy Writ demands this. This necessarily implies recognition. The two lives are bound together by a chain of memory. That life is but a continuation of this, not a new one.

5. My fifth argument is based on facts revealed in

#### A CASE OF SPECIAL PLEADING

found in the seventh chapter of Matthew. Here the Savior says: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many

mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Here the Savior represents a scene which will take place at the judgment. There will doubtless be thousands engaged in it. They plead their case for divine favor. They tell what they did by the name of Jesus. Not *in* His name—that is, by His authority—but by the use of His name. This distinction is brought out by the construction of the Greek. They remember what they did while here in this life, and those associated with them. The two worlds, the connection between them, and their idea of meriting divine favor, were all vividly remembered. This knowledge and exercise of memory are not peculiar to that class. All have the same faculties. They remembered themselves and their associates and their earthly life. It was all a personal reality to them. All this demands recognition. Take that idea out of it, and such language could not be used.

6. My sixth argument is much of the same character. It is based upon

#### THE SAVIOR'S CONVERSATION AT THE JUDGMENT,

as recorded in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew. He here represents all nations as standing before Him. And He separates them, the righteous from the unrighteous, as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. He places the good on His right hand, and the bad on His left. Now mark the conversation between them. The Savior turns to those on His right and says: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of

the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." They remember doing none of these things to the Savior in person, but few of them having lived in that age and country; hence they say: "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or athirst, and gave thee drink?" etc. And the Son of God replies: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even the least, ye did it unto me." Then He turns to those on His left and tells them to "depart, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels." He then gives them the reason why they are thus cast into eternal punishment: they did *not* the things which those on His right hand did, and for which they were blessed. Now, we ask, how could such a conversation be held if both the good and the bad did not remember their past lives, and how they treated the disciples of Jesus? The good remembered the things for which they were blessed, and the bad remembered the things for which they were condemned. They all remembered their life upon the earth; remembered others, and their treatment of them. The Savior would not tell people why they were condemned, if they knew nothing of the reasons. It would all be meaningless to them. Like when one prays in an unknown tongue, they could not say "Amen" to the sentence of condemnation. All this demands a memory and a knowledge of ourselves and others that necessarily results in future recognition.

7. My seventh argument is founded on



## PAUL'S EXPERIENCE IN PARADISE.

As this is fully discussed in a preceding sermon on that special theme, I shall treat it here very briefly.

When Paul was caught away to the "third heaven," where he saw and heard soul-enrapturing things, which he was not permitted to tell, he did not know whether he was in the body or out of it. Every thing pertaining to himself and the surroundings was so natural and life-like that he could not tell whether he was in the body, as in his ordinary life, or whether he had left his body behind when he was caught away. It follows, therefore, that the body which he had, if he was out of his old one, was so like the old one that he could not tell the difference. And it may not have been his old one. Such an experience out of the old body is possible, else Paul would have known that he was not out of the body. Such naturalness and life-likeness make the knowing of ourselves and our associates in this life, as we knew them here, an absolute necessity. When we are so like our former selves as to not know the difference, of course recognition there will be just as it is here.

8. My eighth argument is founded on the facts stated in regard to the rich man and Lazarus. Here, according to the Savior's statement, we have

## A CASE OF ACTUAL RECOGNITION.

Whether this be a parable or a historical fact, it matters not. In either case it teaches the same lesson. A parable never represents a thing as occurring that never occurs, or that may not occur.

It is fair to presume that the acquaintance between

the rich man and Lazarus, was not very intimate in this life. But when they met in the unseen world, they recognized each other. The rich man knew Lazarus and knew himself. When he prayed for Lazarus to be sent to give him a drop of water, he was told to "remember" that in this world he had his good things, and Lazarus his evil things. He was told to reflect upon the way he had lived on the earth; how he had treated Lazarus, and lived only for self. He was not only told to remember, which establishes the fact that the Son of God recognized the exercise of memory as a fact in the spirit world, but he actually did remember, and did recognize the beggar whom he had turned hungry from his gate. He also remembered that he had five brothers living in sin as he had done, and he remembered the teaching of Moses and the prophets, that if they died in impenitence, they would come to the same place of torment. This amounts, therefore, to an actual demonstration of the fact of our proposition.

9. My ninth and final argument is based upon

#### THE SAINTS' SHOUT OF VICTORY.

The Lord will descend from heaven with the spirits of the redeemed to awaken and glorify their sleeping dust, to call it in glorious triumph from its place of sacred rest and reunite it with the spirit that had thus long been separated from it. At this glorious time Paul represents the saints as standing on the verge of their empty grave and lifting their voices in a grand shout of victory: "O death, where now is thy sting? O grave, where now is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord

Jesus Christ!" How could they shout victory over the grave, and thank God for that victory, if they did not remember having lived upon the earth, having slept in the grave, and that it was through the Lord Jesus Christ, their glorious Redeemer, that God gave them the victory over death and the grave? And a new song will be given them, the song of redeeming love, a song that angels can not sing: "Unto him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Only redeemed humanity can sing this song, and no one could sing it if he did not remember that he had lived on the earth; that he was defiled by sin, and that he was cleansed from it by the blood of the Lamb. Hence no one could honor Christ as his Savior and Redeemer, but for this memory. The honor and love and praise of Christ and of our Father through all eternity depend on the truth of our proposition! But for that memory and knowledge of the two lives and the two worlds which make recognition a necessity, we could never know our relations to Christ and our indebtedness to Him for salvation. Hence we could never know and love and honor Him as our Savior and Redeemer. I therefore regard the proposition as true, beyond all possibility of mistake. Heaven, with all that heaven means, depends upon it. Indeed, without, there could not be a *future* life. If in that world we do not remember this, that life would be as independent of this as this is of any preceding it. It would be a new life and a new world; but it would be *no part* of this—hence not the future of this.

The petty objections that may be imagined against the theory amount to nothing as compared to the grand realities of heaven, which absolutely depend upon that which makes our affirmation a necessity. The ancient Sadducees had their objections, which the Savior said grew out of the fact that they knew not the Scriptures nor the power of God; and the same cause still underlies all objections we have heard in modern times. The same old Sadducean objection is still raised, as to what one will do who recognizes a plurality of wives in the glory land? They seem to forget that we do not have wives in that glorified state. There will be no sex there, and no sexual relations. Our remembering that certain ones were our wives in this world, no matter how many, will amount to nothing when *that relation* no longer exists.

Many circumstances, well authenticated, seem to indicate that the dying gain glimpses of the eternal world before the spirit has left the body. Among the angels that have come to bear their ransomed spirits home, they seem to recognize the loved ones that have gone before. While we can not rely upon this as positive proof, and I do not use it as such, it is worthy of consideration. I remember a case, the facts of which I can vouch for. A nephew and namesake died about the age of six. He was a great favorite of his grandfather, who had preceded him to the spirit land about two years. He loved his grandpa dearly, and greatly lamented his death, for one so young. He talked about him a great deal after he was dead, but had gradually ceased to talk about him much before his own death. He lay in a state of seeming unconsciousness, and all were expecting the end at every breath.

He had not spoken for some time. Finally a smile played over his face; his countenance lighted up with joy; his eyes opened and sparkled with delight, as he lifted his hands, pointing upward, exclaiming, "My grandpa! my grandpa!" and with his joy-lit countenance he ceased to breathe! Was his grandpa in the company that had come for him? or was it all a delusion? The angels came for Lazarus and bore his spirit to paradise. We infer that they perform the same message of love for all of the Father's children. As the spirits of the redeemed have visited the earth in some instances, which God has been pleased to reveal, may they not, with the angels, come to convey the loved ones to the Father's house? The two worlds are doubtless closer together than many imagine. The border land is narrow. It is only a step from the one to the other. We can almost shake hands with those on the other shore when the gates are left ajar!

With the mention of a case of peculiar interest, recorded by Bro. M. E. Lard, if I remember correctly, in one of the early numbers of his *Quarterly*, I close.

An old sailor, who had spent many years on the deep, came inland to visit friends. He heard the pure Gospel of Christ, and obeyed it. In order to enjoy church privileges, now so dear to him, he gave up the sea, and settled in the State of Missouri. His wife, who had long been a faithful companion, was also a Christian. For several years, with a competency, they enjoyed the luxury of a quiet, comfortable home, beloved by their brethren, and delighting in the service and the worship of God. Finally the old man sickened and died. His end was full of peace, as his latter days had been full of love. His friends were gath-

ered about his bed, expecting every breath to be the last. He had talked much about the heavenly home, but for a time he had said nothing. Finally he thus addressed his aged companion: "Mary, we have lived a long time together, but we have to separate now. We have often talked about the things in the Father's family on high, and wondered how they are. This will all soon be known to me. I shall soon be there, and know all about it as a glorious reality. I can't tell it to you after I have learned it myself; but put your hand in mine, and when I am gone, if the sea is calm, the sky is clear, the port of heaven is open, and all is well, I'll send you back a sign." She put her faithful hand in his—that hand which had so often smoothed his troubled brow and lightened for him the burdens of life—and all in breathless silence awaited the end. He breathed a few times, and then his bosom sank as it only sinks when the spirit has taken its flight. The very breathing was suspended, as far as possible, while all waited with intense concern. At last, when they thought that there was to be nothing more, he gave her hand a gentle pressure, and all was over! The sea was calm, the sky was clear, the port was open, all was well, and he had sent her back the sign!

## SERMON XVII.

OUR POSITION: ITS SAFENESS AND  
STRENGTH.

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man."—*Eccl.* xii: 13.

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."—1 *Thess.* v: 21.

THERE is usually a safe side to mooted questions. In the affairs of life, men are anxious to be on the safe side. In regard to the things of eternal life, this inclination should be supreme. When the eternal interests of the soul are at stake, one should be satisfied only with the infallibly safe side of every question in which these interests are involved. We should never allow theories and predilections to warp our judgments, fashion our feelings and prevent our taking the safe side of every question affecting our eternal interests. Let us prove all things, and hold fast to the good. That which is safe is good.

Both reason and the word of God teach us that, in the very nature of things, salvation can not depend on fine-spun theories regarding the system of redemption. A man of fine intellect graduates from a first-class college, then takes a course in theology under distinguished teachers, shuts himself up in his study, labors to unravel the tangled skein of sectarian theology till his hair is frosted for the grave, when, behold he comes before the world with a theory of the way of salvation, the acceptance of which is essential to eternal life!



Could any thing be more absurd? How could such a system of redemption be adapted to the comprehension and wants of the race? On the other hand, a good old woman sits in the corner of her humble cabin, smokes her pipe, applies her needles, reads her Bible, is happy in her child-like faith in Christ, devoted in her worship, and yet hardly believes that the world revolves upon its axis! The way of salvation through faith in Christ is a simple thing. The world was in the depths of ignorance when the faith once for all delivered to the saints was offered to the race. The great mass of humanity has ever been in profound ignorance of the learning and philosophy of the world. Christianity, therefore, must of necessity be simple to meet the wants of man. It was not made for the wise, for philosophers, but for the "common people." These heard the Son of God gladly when He was among them, and they have heard Him in all the ages. Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty. Since the religion of Christ is adapted to the ignorant, it follows that it must be simple. Its essential features must be simple facts to be believed, and duties to be performed. The Spirit of prophecy said that the way of salvation through Christ, would be so simple that the way-faring man, though a fool, need not err therein; so plain that he who runs might read. This can not apply to the many deep things of God connected with the scheme of redemption, but simply to the conditions of salvation; that which one must believe and do to secure the promise of salvation. Many theories may be profoundly interesting and of

no little importance, but still not necessary to salvation, one way or the other. For instance, one may agree or disagree with the writer in the theory advanced in a number of these sermons, without its affecting in any way his salvation. But the facts of the Gospel must be accepted and obeyed, or he dies without a promise of eternal life. We should, therefore, be concerned about the essential things, not the speculative; and be careful to be on the safe side of these. Man's whole duty is to fear God and keep his commandments. No matter what may be true or false in the theories of men, to fear God and keep His commandments is one's whole duty, and the doing of it infallibly secures his salvation. In view of this fact, divinely stated, let us consider the different theories of the way of life.

#### THEOLOGICAL SYSTEMS.

Take Calvinism with all its unchangeable decrees, its election of a definite and fixed number to eternal life, and the rest left helpless to perish: how does this theory affect one who fears God and keeps His commandments? When one fears God and keeps His commandments, he does his whole duty. God does not require of one more than his whole duty. Hence, if Calvinism be true, the one who does all that God requires of him is safe. He is one of the elect. No man can be lost while doing all that God requires of him—while doing his whole duty. Hence such a man is infallibly safe, if Calvinism be true. He is equally safe if it be false. If there be no such decrees, and elections to eternal life, but that men are free agents, to be judged for the deeds done in the body, then the man who has

done his whole duty—has done all that God requires of him—is infallibly safe. It follows, therefore, that whether Calvinism be true or false, there is a way that is infallibly safe, and every one may walk in it who will, and that is, to fear God and keep His commandments. So, then, when we discard all theological theories and human systems, and simply accept Christ as our Lord and Master, believe all He says and do all He directs, we are on the safe side of the great matter of eternal life. If Calvinism is right, we are right also, in common with it; if it be wrong, we are still right, independent of it. No matter what else may be right, or what wrong, we are right, and can never be wrong, while we do our whole duty in fearing God and keeping His commandments.

The same is true of Arminianism or any other ism, even of Universalism. If Universalism be true, the man is safe who fears God and keeps His commandments. If there be any good in the doctrine, either for this world or the world to come, he gets it. And if the doctrine be false, he is still safe, while destruction awaits those who rely upon the false theory. Whether Universalism be true or false, therefore, the man is infallibly safe who fears God and keeps His commandments.

It is a fundamental principle of the Disciples of Christ, engaged in the work of restoration, to take the word of God, and that only, as their rule of faith and conduct. Believing all that God says, and doing all that He directs, is their system of salvation. They have the divine assurance that this is all that God requires; that in doing this they do their whole duty. This being true, it follows as a consequence that all

their specific positions, if taken in harmony with this principle, are infallibly safe. Not only so, but this is so manifest upon examination that they are incontrovertible. Let us consider them in the light of this divine principle.

#### CREEDS.

In the various systems of theology, and isms of modern times, creeds have a prominent place. While these differ widely from each other, each claims to be an embodiment of divine truth. Each claims to be right. But no one will acknowledge that any other is right. We claim the word of God only as our creed. The inspired truth, that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God," is strictly the Christian creed; but as the whole New Testament is an inspired amplification of it, showing what it includes, the entire volume, in that sense, becomes the creed. Our creed, then, is an inspired one. No one denies that it is right. While the advocates of no human creed will admit that any other human creed is right, they all admit that our creed is right. It is not in controversy. While all theirs are in dispute, ours is not. However much of truth any one of theirs may have, ours has it, with none of its error. Hence ours has all their truth, and none of their error. The contents of their creeds, not ours, are in debate. Ours is conceded. About it there is no controversy. And as to the right of having a creed, the right to theirs is in controversy; ours is not. Whether they have a right to frame such creeds as bonds of union and communion, is in debate. They think they have; others think they have not. But the right to take the creed that God gave

us, through His Son, is denied by none. What they do is in debate; what we do is not debatable. Hence if they, or any of them, are right in holding to their creed, we are right in holding to ours; and if they are wrong in holding to their creed, we are still right in holding to ours. Whether, therefore, they are right or wrong in this, we are right, and can never be wrong. In regard to our creed we are infallibly safe.

#### NAMES.

Among the numerous classes of religionists nothing is held more sacred than their name. Much may be said concerning their teaching, if the name is not mentioned. But touch this, and you touch the ark of God. Whether God's people have a right to wear names individually, or as designating the church to which they belong, unknown in that way to the Holy Scriptures, is a question about which there has been much controversy. And the end seems to be as far to-day as it was at the beginning. But that it is right to wear the names Christian, Disciple, Saints, Brethren, etc., and Church of God, Church of Christ, body of Christ, kingdom of God, etc., as these names are applied in the New Testament, no one denies. That these are right, when used as God's people used them anciently under apostolic instruction, is universally conceded. Hence the debate about names, of which there has been much, is about the names they wear, not about those we wear. Ours are not in debate; theirs are. If they are right, we are right; if they are wrong, we are still right. Hence our position is infallibly safe.

## CHURCH POLITY.

The organization and government of the church are expressed by the word polity. In regard to this there has been much controversy in the religious world. Various forms of ecclesiastical government are contended for as having peculiar advantages. Each claims to be superior to the rest. The Methodist diocesan bishop, the law-making conferences, the presiding elders, the circuit riders, etc., are claimed to be superior to any other system of man's invention. Presbyterians make the same claim for their presbytery, synod and general assembly. And so through the whole list. That it is right to have these systems and forms of government devised by the wisdom of men, has ever been in controversy; and it will so continue to be till the will of God is supreme upon the earth. But to do just as we find God's people did in these respects, under apostolic instruction, is right, has not been and will not be denied. They claim a right to have their form of government, and concede to us the right to accept that found in the New Testament. The rightfulness of their position is in controversy; ours is not. The debate is all about their position, not about ours. If they are right, so are we; if they are wrong, we are still right, and can not be wrong while we follow strictly the divine model.

## DENOMINATIONS.

The Church of God, according to modern orthodoxy, has many "branches." It is split into almost endless denominations. So interwoven is denominationalism with the church in the popular mind, that

the church is rarely contemplated without it. Is it right to belong to a denomination? Some say, yes; others, no. It is in controversy. Each claims that his denomination is right, and all others wrong. But all admit that the Church itself is right; that it is right to belong to that. The Apostles and first Christians under their instruction belonged to it and to nothing else. No one of them belonged to any denomination. This all concede. Hence all concede that this is right. Here is where the Disciples stand. This is uncontroverted ground. It is infallibly safe. If they are right in belonging to the Church of God and to something else that the New Testament says nothing about, we are right in belonging to the Church of God without that addition. If they are wrong in having this addition, we are right in not having it. Our position, therefore, is infallibly right and safe.

“FAITH ONLY.”

The “evangelical world” mainly insist on justification by faith only. By which they mean that they are justified or pardoned by faith without obedience to Christ in baptism or any other positive command. Over this there has been a world of controversy. The Disciples hold to justification by faith as tenaciously as any other people, but they expect the blessing flowing therefrom, when their faith leads them to obedience. Hence they obey at once the divine requirement through which they have the promise of the divine blessing. That this is infallibly safe, can not be intelligently denied. Whether we are justified before we are baptized or when we are baptized, it is admitted that the baptized penitent believer is par-



doned. Hence if they are justified before baptism, so are we; and if they are not, then we are safe in our prompt obedience. So if they are right, we are right also; and if they are wrong, we are still right. Since we obey promptly and they often defer it, we are on the safe side. Whether they are right or wrong, our position is right and infallibly safe.

#### BAPTISM.

Over baptism there has been endless controversy in the religious world. But where has it been? Not over any position of ours. We immerse. The denominations do the same. They all admit that immersion is baptism. But they also sprinkle and pour. Here is the ground in debate. The debate is all about sprinkling and pouring. What we do is not in controversy. What they do and we refuse to do, is the thing over which all the controversy has been. So if they are right we are right; and if they are wrong we are right. Whether they are right or wrong, we are right and infallibly safe.

In regard to the subject of baptism, we occupy the same safe position. We baptize penitent believers. All the rest do the same. They all admit that this is right. But they also baptize those who are not believers. Here is the ground of controversy. The debate is not about what *we* do, but about what *they* do. What *we* do is not debatable. If they are wrong, we are right; if they are right, we are right also. Whether they are right or wrong, therefore, we are right and can not be wrong.

Some years ago we had a debate with one of the strongest men in Kentucky, in which I affirmed that

“the polity and practice of the Church of Christ, to which I belong, are authorized by the word of God.” He affirmed the same of the church to which he belonged. It is a simple fact which can be proved by hundreds, that he did not deny a single position which I took. The debate was exclusively confined to that which he did, and which we refused to do. What we do was not controverted in a single case. For instance, on the action of baptism he admitted that immersion was right, but, said he: “you practice exclusive immersion, and the authority for that I deny.” The reply was: “we know nothing about ‘exclusive immersion.’ We immerse; you do the same. You admit that this is right. We refuse to sprinkle or pour. Therefore the debate is not about what we do, but about what you do and we refuse to do. Your position, not ours, is in debate.”

And thus it is in regard to the whole plan of salvation. In simply taking the word of God, and doing as it directs, making it the sole guide and authority in religion, our positions are necessarily, if we follow the rule correctly, incontrovertible and infallibly safe. When there is so much at stake; when eternity with all its consequences is looming up before us, and all the soul's eternal interests are involved, how careful should we be to occupy positions infallibly safe. And this privilege is ours. That position, the correctness and safety of which are conceded by all, is before us, with all its comforts, assurances and blessings. Let us fear God and keep His commandments. When we do this we do our whole duty. God requires nothing more. He would not have us do more. His commandments are plain and simple.

There is no mistaking them. We may puzzle our brains over theories and systems, but not over the simple commandments of God. In doing His commandments we do His will; and Jesus says: "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." "He who hears these sayings of mine and does them, is a wise man, building on the rock. While he who hears them and does them not, is a foolish man, building on the sand." He who does the commands of Jesus is wise; he who does them not is foolish. Every thing depends on doing the will of God. Fear God and keep His commandments, and you are infallibly safe for time and eternity. No matter what else may be true or what false, you have done your whole duty and have God's assurance of eternal life.

SERMON XVIII.  
A FAREWELL TALK.

This farewell talk to the Mt. Byrd church was made to a large and deeply interested audience on the last Lord's day in October, 1885.

DURING his third missionary tour, while on his way to Jerusalem, and anxious to get there in time to attend the feast of Pentecost, Paul sent for the elders of the church at Ephesus to meet him at Miletus; and this is his farewell talk to them:

“Ye yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, after what manner I was with you all the time, serving the Lord, with all lowliness of mind, and with tears, and with trials which befell me by the plots of the Jews: how that I shrank not from declaring unto you any thing that was profitable, teaching you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there; save that the Holy Spirit testifieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But I hold not my life of any account, as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I testify unto you this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God. Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in the which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord, which he purchased with his own blood. I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Wherefore watch ye, remembering that by the space of three years I ceased not to admonish every one night and

day with tears. And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, who is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified. I coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. In all things I gave you an example, how that so laboring you ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."—*Acts xx: 18-35.*

Brethren, I have desired, before it is too late, and the golden opportunity is forever past, to make you this farewell talk.

Sixteen years ago last August, I came among you and spake to you in the name of the Master for the first time. The first of October following, I began my regular work for you as a preacher of the gospel of Christ. The record shows that soon after this, when the church list was corrected by the exclusion of all who could not be found and reclaimed, the number of members was two hundred and forty. It also shows that since then, at different times and in different ways, the number added has been about four hundred. In consequence of death, removals, exclusions, and the building up of two other churches, the membership has been so reduced as to range from three hundred to three hundred and seventy-five.

Many of you remember the great crisis through which we passed during the first year. It was the most serious trouble through which the church has ever passed. Indeed it was the only very serious trouble the church has ever had in its history of more than half a century. This threatened the life of the church. The deep anxiety that brethren felt can never be described. The days and nights of anxious care and labor on the part of some of us, can never be ap-

preciated by those who have not passed through a like crisis in a church in which they felt that all its interests, dearer than life itself, hung suspended as by a hair. But through the good providence of God and the faithfulness of the brethren involved, it was happily adjusted. The dark and threatening cloud rolled away, the sun of peace and harmony beamed again upon us, and its brightness was never more obscured.

I am now enabled to say some things that it gives me deep pleasure to say. During these sixteen years the church never opposed any measure that I advocated. Nor was it ever divided in regard to such measure. A singular unanimity characterized you during the whole time. This can not be said of all churches for that length of time. It is an honor to you, and worthy of all commendation.

During these years there was never a vote cast against me as your preacher. If any one desired a change, he did not make it manifest. This is also very commendable. In too many churches at least a small minority will soon desire a change, and continue to agitate the question till they get it. As a rule, those hardest to please are of the least value to the church. You have not been hard to please. You have not been exacting. For this I commend you.

Another thing which gives me pleasure to testify to in your behalf, is that during these many long years, covering more than two-thirds of my life as a preacher, not one of this large congregation ever spoke to me an unkind word. How many you have spoken about me, I know not. I only know that you never thus spoke to me. And this, as far as I now remember, is true of the entire community, regardless of church

relations. This is certainly to be appreciated. This universal kindness has much to do with making life pleasant, regardless of its other misfortunes. And this manifestation of appreciation has much to do with developing the resources of man.

Still another thing to be more highly appreciated perhaps than those mentioned, I now state with feelings of profound gratitude. During three years of those sixteen, I was unable to preach. During two of the years, I preached a few times. One year I was in the house but once. But you continued to sustain me, as if I were at work. This you did till circumstances enabled me to protest, and decline your further generosity. This is more than can be said of all churches. How strikingly does it contrast with those churches that dock their preacher's salary if compelled by sickness to miss even one appointment. I thank God that I never wasted time on any such a soulless church. While these happy relations are forever passed, and another shall go in and out before you, and I shall be engaged exclusively in other work while the Lord permits me to stay among you, which can not be long, I should be lost to every feeling of gratitude did I not treasure up in my heart a fond remembrance of these manifestations of your kindness. To spend among you my few remaining days, and have my frail body laid away to rest with yours till we all arise in the likeness of our Lord, I desire as the consummation of our long and happy relationship in Christ.

Of course I can not but feel deeply concerned about the future welfare of this church. A large number of its members are my children in the Gospel. The beloved



disciple of Jesus said: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth." This must be the feeling of every true man of God. The preacher who labors for the cause of Christ as paramount to self, is anxious to build gold, silver and precious stones into the spiritual temple of God, instead of wood, hay and stubble. I feel deeply concerned as to my own responsibilities during these years. I am profoundly conscious of great imperfections in work, both in the pulpit and out. There are those in the community, both in the church and out, in an unsaved state. Am I free from responsibility? As to those within, I have been unable of late years to look after such. As to those without, they have chosen their own course in the face of all the teaching and warning I could give them. We can not force men to be Christians. They went down to hell all around the Son of God, when He gave His life to save them. Doubtless Paul felt more deeply concerned than I, and yet he assured the church at Ephesus that he was pure from the blood of all men. While many who enjoyed the opportunities of his instruction were yet unsaved, the fault was not his. And this is the ground of his innocence: "For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God." On this ground, brethren, I claim my freedom from further responsibility. You can bear me witness that I never shrunk from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God in regard to any matter, theoretical or practical, involving your interests. Whatever else I may have been, I can say without boasting, I have not been cowardly. I have not shrunk from any responsibility imposed by divine teaching. When this is faithfully done, both in

teaching and practice, the preacher's responsibility ends.

But my anxiety about the future welfare of the church is not so easily disposed of. You have enjoyed a good reputation at home and abroad. It would be painful to leave you with the thought that this will be forfeited. I earnestly pray that you may continue for generations to come, the beacon-light that you have been to this community, and the helper in good works in the regions beyond. During the years of our association you have sent six young men to the College of the Bible. You have supported all our mission enterprises. Let this good work go on in the future as it has in the past. Strive to maintain the same spirit of unity and harmony that have made so pleasant the associations of the past. In order to this you will, as you have so often done in the past, suffer a word of advice. I want to give you some directions which, if you follow, will secure the ends so earnestly desired.

In his letter to the Galatians Paul directs that if one "be overtaken in any transgression, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of meekness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted." I urge this advice, brethren, upon you. It is essential to your prosperity. It must needs be that offences come; but woe unto the church that does not deal promptly with them. In the figure of the vine and the branches, the Savior says that God cuts off every branch that bears not good fruit. What God does the church should do. God is not bound by the church. Whether the church cuts off a fruitless branch or not, God does. There are doubtless many members in the churches all over this country whom God has cut off. They are lost

and do not know it. And the church keeps them in ignorance of the fact. This is to them a positive injury. It will almost certainly result in their final loss of heaven. And the church will be largely responsible. Brethren, let me entreat you to avoid this. The churches are, in this way, carrying a vast load of dead material. It may give you no special trouble for a while; but it injures the reputation and influence of the church; and it is wrong. Then, sometime, when some important question is agitated in the church, this whole raft floats into the current and is too big to handle. Hundreds of churches have gone to pieces on the breakers in this way. Every one, therefore, that gets out of the way, you should seek at once to reclaim. This should be done by the spiritual ones, and they should see to it that they go in the spirit of the Master. He who goes in a self-righteous, fault-finding spirit, will defeat the end he has in view. Nothing is more effective in reconciling men in any respect than a willingness to confess our own sins. When we go to the erring to reclaim them from forbidden paths, we must consider our own weaknesses and imperfections. We can, therefore, enter into sympathy with the transgressor to a certain extent. He must be impressed with the idea that our mission is to save him; that it is one of *love*, and not of executive harshness. We do not seek to find men guilty and then punish them for it, as they do in court. Even the final act of exclusion, when all other efforts to reclaim have failed, has in view the salvation of the offender. Faithful, earnest work, in this spirit, will rarely fail to accomplish the end.

To another admonition in this passage (Gal. vi: 1-5)

I especially invite your attention. Its observance will secure the peace and prosperity of the church with infallible certainty. The Apostle says to them: "bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Then he adds as a reason: "For each man shall bear his own burden." These expressions appear to be contradictory, but they are not. Two distinct Greek words are here rendered "burden." God lays on every one of His children a burden in proportion to his capacity, as the ship is laden that sails for a distant port. He does not intend that any of His children shall be free from such obligation. He sends out no empty vessels. But there are special burdens imposed for the common good. These we are to help one another to bear. While a special burden may be laid upon one, others are not wholly free. There is a mistaken and mischievous idea at this point, obtaining too largely in the churches. When one, for instance, is set apart as bishop, the duties of a bishop especially devolve upon him. But the church should not feel that all others are wholly free from the responsibilities of the position. When the church thus sets one apart, mutual obligations are imposed. And while it is the special duty of one to bear this burden, it is the duty of all to help him. The church can make one's burdens light or heavy, as they may help to bear it. As I have told you in years past, I would tell you again the importance of this and the means of its accomplishment. When you select men to serve you in any special respect, you should encourage them in it. You have no right to do otherwise. You must make men feel that they are appreciated, if you would have them do their work well. If you stay away from the

Lord's house on the Lord's day because there is to be no preacher, and only the elders are to conduct the service, do you think you are helping them to bear this part of their heavy burden? "But," you say: "their talk is not interesting." But you should remember that we do not go to the house of the Lord to be entertained, but to worship God. Besides, with more encouragement, in the way of an appreciative audience, the elders' talk would be greatly improved. It would be a pleasure to them to prepare an instructive talk, while, without it, it is an uninteresting task. The more you can make your teachers feel that their work is appreciated, the more and better work they will do.

Another respect in which the overseers are not helped as they should be, I would have you consider. In order that they may look after the erring ones, it is important that they be promptly informed in regard to misconduct. Hence when you see a member come out of a grog-shop, enjoying the companionship of the vulgar and profane—ashamed of his condition, but too drunk to hide it—you should not tell it to every body else but the elders of the church. In this case the church frequently suffers long on account of such misconduct, and the overseers know nothing about it. On the contrary, you should go to them at once, and say nothing to others.

The same principle holds with equal force in regard to deacons. They consent to take upon themselves an unwelcome task for the good of the church. And why do they so often shrink back from their work? Simply because they are not encouraged in it. A man starts out to solicit funds for the wants of the

church, and when he goes forth with the feeling that he will be rudely received by some and treated with indifference by others, the task is necessarily heavy. But if all should encourage him, and manifest an appreciation of his work, even though they might not give as liberally as he desired, the duty would be a pleasant one. Thus it is that we may bear one another's burdens. We may make light and pleasant the tasks that otherwise would be disagreeable and heavy. We thus "fulfill the law of Christ." The grand royal law of love that rises paramount to all else, is thus exemplified. And in this the church finds the guarantee of its future prosperity.

As the prosperity of the church depends largely on the character of the public worship, you will bear a word of exhortation in regard to that. I have tried to impress you with these facts in years that are passed, and I would re-impress them now for the years of the future. I speak of all public worship, and especially of the Lord's day service.

I. You should attend. This is essential. You can not reap the benefits of the worship unless you are present. Faithful attendance of public worship has much to do with one's faithfulness in other respects. The sixteen years we have labored together show that we have suffered but little by those who regularly attended the house of the Lord. A falling off in this respect generally precedes unfaithfulness in all others. One who has an opportunity of attending the Lord's day worship can not spend the day to divine acceptance, and neglect this. We often hear one say: "I will stay at home and read my Bible. I can spend the day better in reading the Bible than in going to

hear Bro. A preach." This is a ruinous fallacy. One can not spend the Lord's day correctly and neglect to meet with the brethren to honor Christ in the celebration of His death and suffering. We do not go to the house of the Lord on the Lord's day to hear some one preach. The saints did not thus honor Paul. When he was in Troas he remained a week. The disciples all knew he was there and would be with them on the Lord's day; but great as he was, and anxious as they must have been to hear him, they did not come together on the Lord's day to hear him preach. They met to *break bread*. This seems like selecting the very strongest case possible to impress us with the importance of that custom. So we meet now to break bread—to honor the Lord Jesus in the remembrance of Him in the emblems of His broken body and shed blood—when we meet as God would have us meet. For this, then, there can be no substitution. We can not spend the day otherwise and say it will do as well. It gives me pleasure to say that in this respect your record in past years is good. I know of no church whose attendance on the Lord's day is less affected by the absence of a preacher. May this ever continue to be the case.

2. You should not only go to the house of the Lord, but you should go there *to worship*. Your profiting is guaranteed when you go with an object in view. Going with an object in view, you go prepared to obtain it. You should go, not only to worship God, but prepared to worship Him. Judging from observation, many church members do not go to worship God, and they make no preparation to that end. They go to the house of the Lord talking only about the



things of the world. Their thoughts and conversation are on the things of the world till after the service begins. Is it reasonable to conclude that they can then, without a moment's meditation, enter acceptably into the worship? Can they leap at one bound from the world into the bosom of God? We think not. David said he was glad when they said to him: "Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord." He was glad when the hour for worship came. When we are thus glad, and waiting for the time, we are not apt to wait too long. Hence we will not be late at the place of worship. Of course something may occasionally cause any of us to be late; but next to staying away altogether is the habit of being late at the place of worship. It is a bad sign. I believe in signs in some things; for some signs in regard to religion never fail. You should, then, go to the house of the Lord; go to worship God; go meditating on this purpose; go in time. Thus going you may confidently expect the divine blessing.

3. Having come to the house of the Lord in time, prepared in mind and heart to worship God, you should engage in the worship promptly and heartily. When the congregation lingers and delays as if the worship were a dreaded task, it has no good effect in any way. You should begin with that promptness and prosecute it with that heartiness that the world expects in the enjoyment of a good thing. This gives animation to the service; and animation covers a multitude of other defects. The power of the pulpit often suffers by this lifeless service on the part of the church. If you would help the preacher in his work, and

make your own more efficient, throw your souls into the service of God.

4. Finally, direct the worship to meet your spiritual wants. A leading object in congregational worship, is the upbuilding of the church in knowledge and spirituality. Whatever tends to this end should be encouraged. Whatever militates against it should be avoided. Just here, I think, should the question be settled as to the use of instruments of music in the worship of God. The question will be conceded, I think, by all, that what helps the spirituality of the worship, should be advocated, and that what hinders its spirituality, should be opposed. No fair-minded man will deny that. Then it is simply a question as to whether choirs and organs, help or hinder the spirituality of the worship. And this question must be taken as the case exists, not in some possible or imaginary contingency. You should see that your singing, your observance of the Supper, and all, are so conducted as to meet your spiritual wants; to strengthen your devotion, and to increase your spirituality. When the soul is burdened with trials and sorrows, it finds no refreshment in little ditties and modern soulless songs that come and go in a day. Nor does the soul feed upon the entertaining performance of a few select voices. It longs to enter personally into the co-operative worship, "with the spirit, and with the understanding."

And now, brethren, "I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, who is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified." Study the word. Make it the man of your counsel. Be governed in all things by

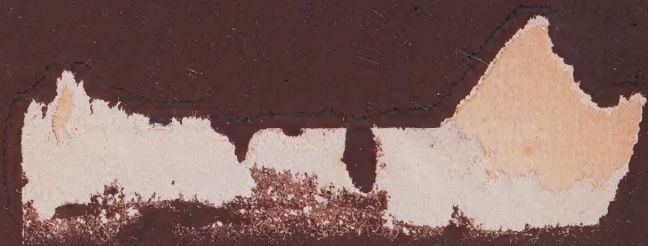
its holy precepts. Honor them that have the rule over you. Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of brotherly love. Seek not your own interests, but in love prefer one another. Keep yourselves in the love of God.

“Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect; be comforted; be of the same mind; live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.” Continue faithful in well-doing, and you shall have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of God, where our associations will be unbroken by afflictions, and where farewells will be forever unknown.











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